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**Driving Change: A Look at Detroit's Oldest Neighborhood in the Face
of the Redevelopment of the Michigan Central Station**

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of the Redevelopment of the Michigan Central Station**

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Tess Maura Lynch

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2020

Dedication

This report is dedicated to my mother, for all her help and support.

Abstract

Driving Change: A Look at Detroit's Oldest Neighborhood in the Face of the Redevelopment of the Michigan Central Station

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2020

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Detroit's oldest neighborhood is Corktown, founded in the early 1800s by Irish immigrants. It is also the site of the Michigan Central Station, a once-opulent train station that was often where new Detroiters first arrived in the city, many of whom went on to work in the automotive industry. Following declining usage, the station was abandoned in 1988 and left to fall into disrepair. The station became a symbol for Detroit's spectacular fall from grace, and for three decades it fell victim to scrappers and became covered in graffiti. In 2018, the Ford Motor Company announced that they had purchased the station and intended to turn it into a new campus for the development of autonomous vehicles. This paper seeks to look at the history of the Corktown neighborhood up to the modern day, tracing its founding by the Irish and its current demographics and prominent culture, as well as the history of the train station itself. This paper also will investigate the concerns and hopes of Corktown stakeholders through a series of interviews conducted in the summer of 2019. These interviews sought to determine what aspects of the redevelopment locals were concerned about, as well as the perceived level of outreach and communication

from the city of Detroit and the Ford Motor Company itself. Through these discussions, the aim is to find areas in which the process could be improved and learn about the current strengths of the neighborhood, and what things people do not want to see change as a result of the development.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Background Research.....	6
Chapter 3: The Story of Corktown.....	9
Chapter 4: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Detroit	13
Chapter 5: Corktown Today.....	18
Chapter 6: The Michigan Central Station as a Parallel to the City	27
Chapter 7: The Ford Motor Company Purchases the Michigan Central Station	35
Chapter 8: Threats and Challenges	41
Chapter 9: Ford's Information Center	44
Chapter 10: The Community Benefits Ordinance	50
Chapter 11: Opinions and Concerns	57
Chapter 12: Interviews.....	62
Interview with Steve	62
Interview with Patricia.....	65
Interview with Laura.....	69
Interview with Frank.....	71
Interview with Sarah.....	76
Chapter 13: Findings.....	79
Chapter 14: What Should Be Done About Projects Like This?	89
Chapter 15: What Is Next for the Train Station?	91

Appendix	93
Works Cited	149
Vita.....	161

List of Figures

Figure 1:	The Corktown neighborhood's relationship to downtown Detroit.....	2
Figure 2:	Corktown's early days	9
Figure 3:	Corktown's residential neighborhood	21
Figure 4:	Corktown's residential neighborhood	22
Figure 5:	Corktown's main street, Michigan Avenue.....	24
Figure 6:	An image of the Michigan Central Station	27
Figure 7:	The interior of the Michigan Central Station.....	28
Figure 8:	The interior of the abandoned Michigan Central Station.....	31
Figure 9:	The abandoned train station	32
Figure 10:	A map of Ford's Corktown projects	34
Figure 11:	Renderings of what the station will look like	38
Figure 12:	The wall of community opinions	43
Figure 13:	Two columns featuring information about the development.....	45
Figure 14:	Two columns featuring information about the development.....	45
Figure 15:	Two columns featuring information about the development.....	46
Figure 16:	Two columns featuring information about the development.....	46

Chapter 1: Introduction

New York has the Statue of Liberty. Paris has the Eiffel Tower. Detroit has the Michigan Central Train Station. Built in the magnificent Beaux-Arts style, the station is the picture of elegance, a model of Detroit's place as a prominent, influential city.¹ Or, at least, it was. Those who are not surprised to know that Detroit is no longer quite as prominent as it once was will likely also not be surprised to learn that the train station was abandoned in 1988 after years of declining service, and left to rot by absentee landlords for nearly 30 years.² In combination with the city's rising economic troubles stemming from the volatility of the automotive industry and suburbanization, more and more buildings around the city were faced with the same fate as the beautiful train station: abandonment, looting, and, for many, eventual demolition.

The Michigan Central Station became an icon of Detroit's abandonment, just one of Detroit's many buildings considered "ruin porn." But in 2018, it was announced that the Ford Motor Company had purchased the building and planned to redevelop it into a center for the development of autonomous automobiles, becoming the centerpiece of Ford's new "Corktown campus." Many view the train station as a future symbol of Detroit's rebirth. But what are the effects this development - and the hundreds, if not thousands, of new Corktowners drawn to the area as a result - will have on the small historic neighborhood?

¹ Aili McConnon, "How Detroit's revival is anchored in its long-vacant train station," *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 2020, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/midwest/ct-nw-nyt-detroit-revival-michigan-central-station-20200124-v7ajtszklvdznixkf4un4i2sqz-story.html>.

² Amber Ainsworth, "A brief history of Michigan Central Station as historic Detroit train depot prepares for new chapter," *Click on Detroit*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/2018/06/16/a-brief-history-of-michigan-central-station-as-historic-detroit-train-depot-prepares-for-new-chapter/>.

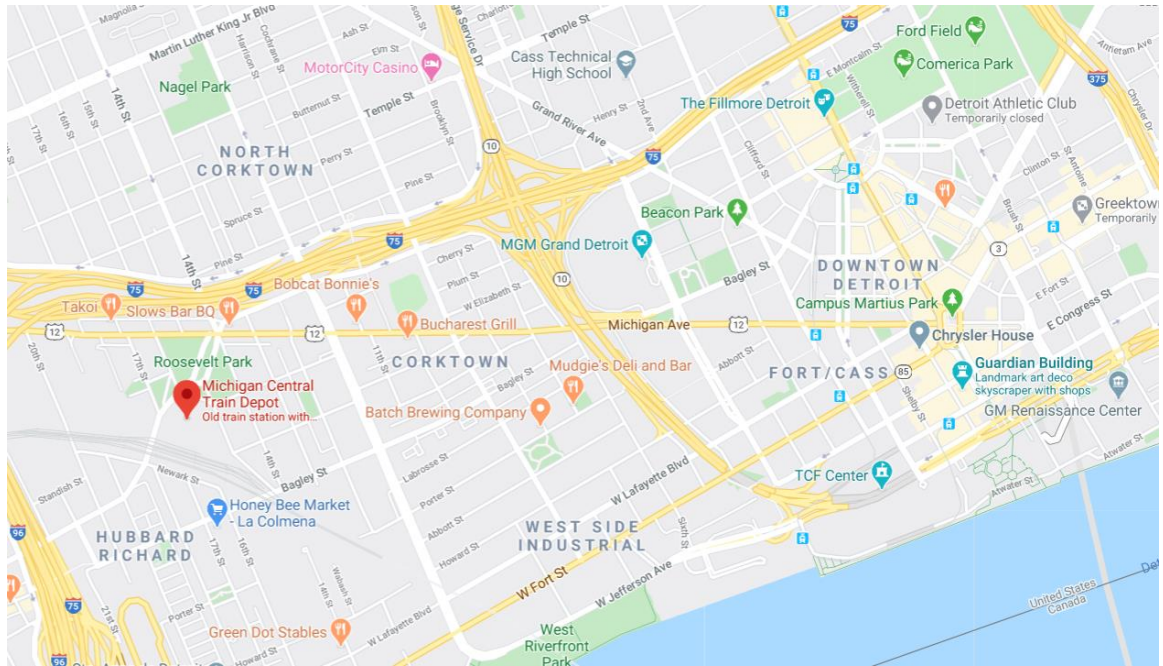


Figure 1: The Corktown neighborhood’s relationship to downtown Detroit (the red pin is Michigan Central Station)³

Corktown’s threat is not “gentrification” as it often applies to neighborhoods in cases like this. The neighborhood is a plurality white, and relatively middle-class. These aspects of the neighborhood may not change as a result of this development. But is there a “cultural” gentrification, or rather, a homogenization, that threatens neighborhoods, turning them into clones of neighborhoods all around the country?

Current scholarship on gentrification suggests that it is in fact a tricky topic to define. Through most of the books I looked through when conducting my research, I found that definitions varied as to whether an empty building that was purchased and redeveloped could be considered “gentrification;” some sources do state that gentrification is applicable

³ “Map of Corktown and Downtown Detroit,” Google Maps, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Michigan+Central+Train+Depot/@42.3315929,-83.0603394,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x883b2d58ea735819:0x9986fdbad81e24ac!8m2!3d42.3287216!4d-83.077763>

even when the area in question is currently vacant, but I found that to be a gray-area in the wider discussion.⁴ I also found that the majority of definitions emphasized an inextricable link between poverty and gentrification. The book *Gentrification of the City* suggests that early definitions of gentrification leaning simply on the change of a neighborhood from low-income to middle-class are outdated. Amongst the hallmarks of gentrification in their definition that I find most relevant in the discussion of the train station redevelopment are “the rise of hotel and convention complexes and central-city office developments,” and “the emergence of modern ‘trendy’ retail and restaurant districts.”⁵ This is not to say that Corktown doesn’t already have a reputation as a trendy restaurant district - it very much does. But it is also still quite residential, and infill development in vacant lots could change the makeup of the neighborhood.

The book also discusses gentrification as a hallmark of a “post-industrial city.” There are few cities more notoriously industrial than Detroit, and this association of industry and gentrification is one that I hadn’t been aware of prior to my research. The book turns to literature of the 1970s and early 1980s to suggest that gentrification “represents an historically new phase in urban development and the primacy of consumption over production.”⁶ It’s just another layer that adds to the trickiness of associating gentrification with this new development, as although Ford isn’t building factories in Corktown, they are still building one link in the chain of automotive production i.e, the development and testing stages.

⁴ Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xv.

⁵ Neil Smith and Peter Williams, “Alternatives to orthodoxy: invitation to a debate,” in *Gentrification of the City*, edited by Neil Smith and Peter Williams (New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.

⁶ Neil Smith and Peter Williams, “Alternatives to orthodoxy: invitation to a debate,” in *Gentrification of the City*, edited by Neil Smith and Peter Williams (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

There are certain specific effects of gentrification, based on some definitions of the word, that I think will be unlikely as a result of the train station redevelopment, such as “realignments of police practices” or “reallocations of neighbourhood public surfaces.”⁷ But I found in my discussions with Corktown locals that the fear of some of the more notorious effects of gentrification, like changes in the makeup of the neighborhood and rent hikes, are pressing to at least some members of the community.

Although Corktown has remained mostly intact in large part thanks to its heritage and culture, a concern of the train station project is that if it really does provide the exponential growth to the area that is expected, perhaps it will overwhelm the little neighborhood, and perhaps take that culture with it. It would be a shame for the local institutions that kept Corktown alive so long to disappear when the neighborhood becomes more popular. It would be a further shame to see rapid growth and development steamroll history in the name of accommodating the new. Popular opinion has noted the symbolic nature of this train station: “This station...really was a metaphor for the heyday of Detroit...and it also then, obviously, became a symbol for the decline of Detroit,” said one article from the Detroit Free Press, and as the station begins the redevelopment process, it “could continue to be a barometer of Detroit’s health.”⁸

I went into this process not only thinking, but assuming, that Corktown residents would feel unheard. I assumed that Ford was doing the bare minimum in terms of outreach to the neighborhood. My research question was “What is the history of the Corktown neighborhood, and what are the concerns and hopes of Corktown residents and business owners in light of the redevelopment of the Michigan Central Train Station?”

⁷ Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly, *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xv.

⁸ Julie Hinds, “Detroit’s comeback focus of History network special,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/2018/06/19/detroit-history-channel-special-documentary-ford-michigan-central-station/714429002/>

Corktown, though started by the Irish, has been occupied by numerous ethnicities and backgrounds throughout its 200-year-history. It has proven to be an example of how many groups can live together and create a community defined by its heritage and history. The redevelopment of the Michigan Central Station has the opportunity to inject positive investment in this community, but also the threat of catalyzing a destruction of the neighborhood that more than 200 years of residents have worked so hard to build. This is the story of that building, those people, and the comeback of an American city.

Chapter 2: Background Research

The process of conducting research to write this paper was not wholly unlike the process by which Corktown residents and other curious Metro Detroiters have been learning about the project - though the vast and varied informational materials put out by the Ford Motor Company in an all-encompassing and thorough education process. But my research started in Texas, 1400 miles away, with books. To properly tell this story, it was important that I understood the context behind the neighborhood and the Michigan Central Station. Although I grew up in the Detroit area and have my own personal knowledge of Corktown and the long-abandoned train station, there were decades, and even centuries, worth of history to analyze, all of which led to the unique situation of the neighborhood and the train station today.

I consulted books on a number of related topics, including, and most importantly, the history of Detroit and of the Michigan Central Station. Many of the books, however, were older, and because the train station redevelopment is so new, the information I found was relegated mostly to information on the neighborhood and train station's history. For information on the redevelopment process, I was lucky in that there has been extensive news coverage of this project, both local to Detroit, and even from international press. Much of the information about the current development came from numerous articles from Detroit's two major newspapers, *The Detroit Free Press* and *The Detroit News*, as well as local business journals and Ford's website.

I also wanted to get a more quantitative look at Corktown today. Who lives there? Although I was constantly hearing about the city's diversity, what exactly is the racial and economic makeup of the neighborhood? For that, I consulted the 2018 American Community Survey. This would give me the most up-to-date look at those who live in

Corktown, especially helpful as 2018 is the year that Ford began the process of renovating the station, so it is a look at who lived there at the very beginning. The data I was most interested in were the racial data, the median income, the ratio of homeowners to renters, and the home value. As I wrote this paper and made connections between various pieces of information I was learning, I found that some of the other information provided by the ACS was relevant as well. For example, finding that there are only 30 individuals who use public transportation to get to work (less even than those who walk to work in this Michigan neighborhood) stood out as notable to me when considered in conjunction with Ford's goal to increase public transportation with their project.⁹

The most important research, however, was working directly with the stakeholders involved in the project. The best way to figure out how citizens and business owners in Corktown felt about the project was simply by talking to them. I began this process by doing an internet search of every business and organization in Corktown. I then sent dozens of emails; I reached out to everyone I could. I was happy to receive a few responses from residents and business owners who were willing to answer my questions about the development.

But it wasn't just these individuals whose voices I wanted to hear. I was interested in getting the full picture of the views of all those involved in the project, so I decided to talk with the city planner in charge of the Corktown neighborhood as well as some individuals who worked with the Ford Motor Company on this project. As I spoke with this varied group, I was able to find different research paths inspired by my conversations. For example, when I spoke with Frank, the city planner, he informed me of CBO plans

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Commuting to Work," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP03), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?id=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

involving Ford, the city, and residents, which I hadn't heard of before in my previous research. That proved to be an extremely helpful tool in understanding the level of partnership between the community and the developers.

These interviews were the most important research tool to me because Ford had been proving to be at least talking a big game with their outreach. It appeared to me that between their newsletters, information center, and community events, they were going above and beyond anything I had ever seen a major corporation do in a project like this. However, I wanted to know the perspective of those to whom Ford was reaching out. Did they feel that Ford was as invested in involving the community as they seemed to be? By compiling information from interviews, news papers, and books, I hoped to be able to create a complete look at Corktown's past, present, and future in the face of this major development project.

Chapter 3: The Story of Corktown

Detroit was founded by the French.¹⁰ But like most American cities, as it grew it began to attract immigrants from all over the world. The Irish were still an early and important group in the city, though their arrival came more than a century after the initial French settlement in the early 1700s. Irish immigration to Detroit, as in the rest of America, picked up significantly as a result of the 1846 potato famine, which drove millions of Irish out of their homeland.¹¹ In Detroit, they settled in an area that, by the mid-1800s, had come to be known as Corktown.¹² It got this name because many of these early settlers came from County Cork.¹³ As Midwestern cities had more space than those out east, immigrants to Detroit didn't live in high rise buildings, but instead were able to spread out of downtown.¹⁴ "Nearly four in five of these later-arriving Irish were common laborers, twice the share of the earlier cohort. They found plenty of work in the city's sawmills, foundries, and rolling mills and as draymen for the omnipresent horse-drawn wagons, carriages, and coaches," cementing this neighborhood's role in the development of transportation.¹⁵ Immigrants of all kinds would be drawn to Corktown over the neighborhood's nearly 200-year history "because of its relative lack of hostility as well as the potential for economic

¹⁰ "The Founding of Detroit," Central Michigan University, accessed March 27, 2020, https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Michigan_Material_Local/Detroit_Pre_statehood_Descriptions/A_Brief_History_of_Detroit/Pages/The-Founding-of-Detroit.aspx.

¹¹ "Irish helped form Detroit from its earliest years," *The Detroit News*, March 15, 2015, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan-history/2015/03/14/irish-history-detroit-st-patrick-day/24771997/>.

¹² John Gallagher, "Here's what you might not know about Corktown's history," *Detroit Free Press*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/business/john-gallagher/2018/07/09/detroit-corktown-history/745668002/>.

¹³ "We Are Corktown," The Neighborhoods, accessed April 30, 2020, <http://theneighborhoods.org/neighborhoods/corktown>.

¹⁴ Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 17-18.

¹⁵ Galster, George, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 93.

improvement.”¹⁶ At the time, “Corktown was chiefly a residential neighborhood close to industry, businesses, and jobs along the river.”¹⁷



Figure 2: Corktown’s early days¹⁸

In the late 1800s, the makeup of Corktown was starting to change. Although still quite Irish, many of the second-generation Irish Catholics chose to move to other parts of the city, and “American-born Protestants of various backgrounds” were taking their place.”¹⁹ By the 1920s, the influx of Mexican immigration to the area contributed to the

¹⁶ Armando Delicato and Julie Demery, *Detroit’s Corktown* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), ii.

¹⁷ Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 18.

¹⁸ Historic Corktown, www.historiccorktown.org.

¹⁹ Galster, George, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 95.

change of the neighborhood. They initially moved into areas directly east and west of downtown - including Corktown - but then began to build up their own community “centered on the commercial strip along Vernor Avenue in southwest Detroit,” which came to be recognized as a neighborhood of its own: Mexicantown.²⁰ As it borders Corktown, Mexican influence became recognizable in Corktown itself, including the introduction of Spanish masses held at St. Anne’s Church.²¹ Another church, Holy Trinity, reflects the neighborhood’s immigrant history with three plaques at the entrance to honor the Irish-, Maltese-, and Mexican-Americans who have made up the congregation.²²

Urban revitalization projects were of increasing popularity amongst city planners around the country in the mid-20th century, and Detroit was no exception. In the 1950s, a project was proposed that would raze much of Corktown, then an “ethnically heterogeneous and declining” neighborhood,” and develop “a district of warehouses and small businesses, something analogous to a suburban industrial park.”²³ The project, known as the West Side Industrial Project, was vehemently opposed by numerous groups, including by “neighborhood church leaders, civic associations, and ethnic clubs.”²⁴ It didn’t matter - the project was approved to go ahead, but it took years to get off the ground: “More than ten years passed between the announcement of plans to redevelop the area and the construction of the first warehouses and small plants.”²⁵ By the time any impact was

²⁰ Galster, George, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 104.

²¹ Galster, George, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 104.

²² Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 30.

²³ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 164.

²⁴ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 164-165.

²⁵ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 165.

felt from the redevelopment, it proved to be minimal: “The gain from the construction of a few small plants and warehouses required a tremendous expenditure of political and economic resources, and in the end, failed to stem Detroit’s economic decline.”²⁶

In the 1960s, another blow to the neighborhood occurred with the development of the Lodge freeway.²⁷ As was seen in cities around the country, highway development in Detroit razed cultural neighborhoods, though luckily, only a portion of Corktown was altered. What was formerly “the main street of the Irish community in Corktown” was replaced by the freeway.²⁸ Today, the Lodge forms the eastern boundary of the neighborhood, cutting it off from downtown.

Although the neighborhood went through a period of decline caused by so-called “urban renewal” projects, it was still recognized for its importance, and still attracted visitors. In 1978, Corktown was added to the National Register of Historic Places.²⁹ The neighborhood was also the home of the Detroit Tigers baseball team until 1999, when Comerica Park opened in midtown.³⁰

²⁶ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 165.

²⁷ “Corktown Historic District,” Detroit Historical Society, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/corktown-historic-district>.

²⁸ Timothy Makower, *Touching the City: Thoughts on Urban Scale* (New York: Wiley, 2014), 35.

²⁹ “Corktown Historic District,” Detroit Historical Society, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/corktown-historic-district>.

³⁰ John Gallagher, “What \$30M project at old Tiger Stadium site means for Corktown,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/business/john-gallagher/2018/05/08/corktown-detroit-tiger-stadium/589618002/>.

Chapter 4: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Detroit

It was called “The Paris of the Midwest.”³¹ Its population peaked at the 4th largest city in this country.³² It was cosmopolitan; “the Silicon Valley of the early 20th century.”³³ Established by the French in 1701 as a fort to protect the fur-trading industry, Detroit’s meteoric rise to fame around the world was due, of course, to the automotive industry.³⁴ The “Big Three” automotive companies: Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors, were perhaps the most obvious sources of Detroit’s spectacular rise to prominence. In the earliest days of automotive transportation Michiganders were the innovators. Henry Ford’s assembly line cut down the time it took to make a car and allowed cars to be made more cheaply. He perpetuated the idea of an 8-hour work day and paid his workers higher than average.³⁵ Many of the immigrants who came to Detroit to work in the automotive industry “were skilled workers with a background in trade unionism and a strong sense of class consciousness. They would be instrumental in the development of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and in leading Detroit’s largest and most militant UAW locals.”³⁶ Immigrants also flocked to Detroit because it “was not a town fraught with political strife or internecine warfare. For the most part its varied groups got along...The Know-Nothing

³¹ “CuriosiD: Why Is Detroit Sometimes Called ‘The Paris of the Midwest?’,” WDET, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://wdet.org/posts/2017/09/13/85692-curiosid-why-is-detroit-sometimes-called-the-paris-of-the-midwest/>.

³² Julie Hinds, “Detroit’s comeback focus of History network special,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/2018/06/19/detroit-history-channel-special-documentary-ford-michigan-central-station/714429002/>.

³³ Julie Hinds, “Detroit’s comeback focus of History network special,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/2018/06/19/detroit-history-channel-special-documentary-ford-michigan-central-station/714429002/>.

³⁴ “French Detroit (1700-1760),” Detroit Historical Society, accessed April 17, 2020, <https://detroithistorical.org/learn/timeline-detroit/french-detroit-1700-1760>.

³⁵ Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 24.

³⁶ Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 24.

Movement and the conflict between immigrants and nativists endemic to so many other American cities did not seriously plague Detroit. In many other places violence reigned with shootings, rioting, and the burning of Catholic churches and other properties. Not so in Detroit.”³⁷

It was the automotive industry that built Detroit into what it became, and it was the volatility of the automotive industry would prove to be in large part responsible for the city’s decline. By the 1950s, things began to change for the city, both within the manufacturing world and socially. From its peak of nearly 1.85 million citizens, suburbanization drew Detroiters out of the city and began the city’s decades-long period of population decline. What followed closely behind was a recession, beginning in 1973.³⁸ “By the early 1980s, industrial capital had largely fled the urban North for low-wage and non-union areas of the country, and of the world. Every major industrial city in the North suffered in the recession of the 1970s and the deindustrialization of the 1980s. But once again, as had happened in the Great Depression of the 1930s, few cities suffered to the extent that Detroit did. And once again, the automobile industry was central to Detroit’s economic problems.”³⁹

The other root cause of the city’s decline was the change in the playing field of the automotive industry. Though Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors remained, some of Detroit’s other automobile companies began to close, like Studebaker, Packard, and Hudson.⁴⁰ Further, during the heart of the Cold War in the 1950s, “the government feared

³⁷ Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 20.

³⁸ Arthur M. Woodford, *This Is Detroit: 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 221.

³⁹ Arthur M. Woodford, *This Is Detroit: 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 221-222.

⁴⁰ Seamus P. Metress and Eileen K. Metress, *Irish in Michigan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 26-27.

that centralised concentrations of industry were targets for nuclear attack from Russia,” which encouraged the spread of the industry once centered in the city to the outskirts or even outside of the city as a whole.⁴¹

By the 2000s, Detroit was in a low place. Much of Detroit’s once-beautiful downtown was neglected or abandoned. Lack of funding to tear down old buildings and build shiny new ones meant that to this day, Detroit has the third-largest collection of pre-World War II buildings in the world, a meager positive amongst the negatives of the city’s long-time economic turmoil.⁴² A list of twelve iconic abandoned but stately buildings in the city was published in the Detroit Free Press in 2004.⁴³ The article was called “Towers of Neglect,” and the buildings became colloquially known as the “Dirty Dozen.”⁴⁴ Amongst them was, of course, the Michigan Central Station. In the last 16 years, however, Detroit has seen a turnaround. The “Dirty Dozen” is no more. One of the twelve, the long-abandoned Book Cadillac Hotel was purchased by Westin, completely renovated, and reopened in 2008, and like the train station, it was focused on as a potential sign of Detroit’s renaissance.⁴⁵ More than a decade later, the area around the hotel has seen renewed interest; within blocks of the hotel have been numerous recent developments including the formerly-abandoned Book Tower, new apartments at a building called The Griswold, and the purchase of the nearby Clark Lofts building and the David Stott Building.⁴⁶ Another of

⁴¹ Timothy Makower, *Touching the City: Thoughts on Urban Scale* (New York: Wiley, 2014), 34.

⁴² “Louis Kamper (March 11, 1861 – Feb. 24, 1953),” Historic Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://historicdetroit.org/architects/louis-kamper>.

⁴³ “Detroit’s Dirty Dozen, Then and Now,” EHERG, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.eherg.com/blog/2016/10/8/detroits-dirty-dozen-then-and-now>.

⁴⁴ “Detroit’s Dirty Dozen, Then and Now,” EHERG, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.eherg.com/blog/2016/10/8/detroits-dirty-dozen-then-and-now>.

⁴⁵ Keith Schneider, “Detroit Revives a Hotel and Some Hope,” *New York Times*, November 4, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/business/05book.html>.

⁴⁶ “New mixed-use development planned across from Westin Book Cadillac downtown,” Crain’s Detroit Business, accessed May 2, 2020,

the twelve buildings, the Broderick Tower, once the “third largest abandoned building in the United States,” reopened in 2012, “boasting 100% capacity before the grand-opening even occurred.”⁴⁷ With the rapid redevelopment in the city, and the 2018 purchase of the Michigan Central Station, a grim article from just 16 years ago could be rendered more or less irrelevant.

But this is not the first time that Detroit has attempted a comeback. For decades, hopes have been tied to major development projects, only to ultimately serve as a letdown. The Renaissance Center was one such project. It stands as either a potential parallel or a contrast to the train station, especially as the project also involved the Ford Motor Company. The idea for the building came about in 1970, when Henry Ford II created the Detroit Renaissance, a non-profit with the intent of combining the resources of the Big Three automobile companies to invest in the city.⁴⁸ The organization decided the best course of action was to create a “city-within-a-city,” inspired by the Peachtree Center in Atlanta, Georgia, which was “a high-rise district of offices, hotels, convention spaces and shopping galleries all connected by skybridges.”⁴⁹ The development would be located on Detroit’s International Riverfront across from Windsor, Ontario, at the time a largely undeveloped area of the city.⁵⁰

<https://www.crainsdetroit.com/article/20160105/BLOG016/160109932/new-mixed-use-development-planned-across-from-westin-book-cadillac>.

⁴⁷ “Detroit’s Dirty Dozen, Then and Now,” EHERG, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.eherg.com/blog/2016/10/8/detroits-dirty-dozen-then-and-now>.

⁴⁸ Colin Marshall, “The Renaissance Center: Henry Ford II’s grand design to revive Detroit – a history of cities in 50 buildings, day 42,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/22/detroit-renaissance-center-henry-ford-ii-grand-design-history-cities-50-buildings-day-42>

⁴⁹ Colin Marshall, “The Renaissance Center: Henry Ford II’s grand design to revive Detroit – a history of cities in 50 buildings, day 42,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/22/detroit-renaissance-center-henry-ford-ii-grand-design-history-cities-50-buildings-day-42>

⁵⁰ Colin Marshall, “The Renaissance Center: Henry Ford II’s grand design to revive Detroit – a history of cities in 50 buildings, day 42,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2015,

The Renaissance Center opened its doors in 1977, and the short-term effects looked promising; by 1979, “adjacent buildings had increased in value by 50%, downtown dining had risen by 40%, and the office occupancy rate (the Renaissance Center’s 2.2m sq ft included) reached 84%).⁵¹ However, some had concerns about the development. “Charles Blessing, then director of the Detroit City Planning Commission, disapproved of it early on, objecting to the very elements of the design that observers lament to this day: its isolation from the rest of downtown, its failure to integrate with other planned riverfront projects, and its stark contrast with the existing texture of the city.”⁵² This is clear to anyone who looks at a picture of Detroit’s skyline. Although, while standing at street level, the building feels right in the heart of downtown, it is surprising to see just how removed the building looks from the rest of the city’s skyscrapers when viewed from the other side of the river.

Though the minds behind the redevelopment of the Michigan Central Station are not claiming to be single-handedly bringing Detroit back from the brink of complete failure this time, the significant attention and hopes placed on it by locals draw parallels to the expectations of the Renaissance Center. It is no surprise, then, that Detroiters are cautiously optimistic about the city’s next attempt at a comeback, and the precarious nature of tying this comeback to one project.

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/22/detroit-renaissance-center-henry-ford-ii-grand-design-history-cities-50-buildings-day-42>

⁵¹ Colin Marshall, “The Renaissance Center: Henry Ford II’s grand design to revive Detroit – a history of cities in 50 buildings, day 42,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/22/detroit-renaissance-center-henry-ford-ii-grand-design-history-cities-50-buildings-day-42>

⁵² Colin Marshall, “The Renaissance Center: Henry Ford II’s grand design to revive Detroit – a history of cities in 50 buildings, day 42,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/22/detroit-renaissance-center-henry-ford-ii-grand-design-history-cities-50-buildings-day-42>

Chapter 5: Corktown Today

Corktown is composed of census tract 5214. The 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates highlight the neighborhood's current diversity. Of this census tract's population of 1,179 individuals, 576 are Non-Hispanic White, 395 are Non-Hispanic Black, and 187 are Hispanic, with 15 Asian residents and 6 residents of two or more races.⁵³ Of the 879 residents 25 years of age or older, 761 are at least high school graduates, and 401 have a Bachelor's degree or higher.⁵⁴ Of the 1,179 residents of this census tract, 1,111 were born in the United States, with 909 having been born in Michigan.⁵⁵ There are 40 foreign-born residents of this tract, 13 of whom are naturalized U.S. citizens, and 27 who are not.⁵⁶ The ACS indicates that 19 of these foreign-born residents are from Europe, 7 from Africa, 7 from Oceania, and 7 from the rest of North America.⁵⁷ Of the listed ancestral categories, the plurality of White residents are Irish (158), with significant populations of

⁵³ U.S. Census Bureau, "Race," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP05), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁵⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, "Educational Attainment," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁵⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Place of Birth," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁵⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Citizenship Status," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁵⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "World Region of Birth," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

German (93), English (89), French or French-Canadian (47), and Hungarian (43).⁵⁸ 959 residents speak English only, with 51 residents speaking English less than “very well.”⁵⁹

Currently, the neighborhood is relatively stable in terms of incoming residents. 1,016 individuals are living in the same house as one year ago; of the 163 living in a different house, 87 are still living in the same county, 43 are living in a different county in the same state, and 33 are living in a different state.⁶⁰ Of the 555 households, 215 are family households and 207 are a householder living alone. The average household size is 2.12 individuals and the average family size is 3.07.⁶¹

The median household income in this census tract is \$41,518 and the mean household income is \$63,307.⁶² Of the 680 civilian employed population over 16 years of age, 178 are employed in the category “arts, entertainment, and recreation and accommodation and food services,” 123 in “educational services, and health care and social

⁵⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “Ancestry,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁵⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, “Language Spoken at Home,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, “Residence 1 Year Ago,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶¹ U.S. Census Bureau, “Households by Type,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶² U.S. Census Bureau, “Income and Benefits (In 2018 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars),” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP03), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

assistance,” and 69 in manufacturing.⁶³ In this census tract, of 673 workers 16 and older, 469 drove a car, truck, or van alone to work and 74 carpooled, 49 worked from home, 31 walked, and 30 took public transportation.⁶⁴ There were 736 total individuals in the civilian labor force, for a total number of 56 unemployed individuals.⁶⁵

There were 762 total housing units in this census tract, of which 555 were occupied and 207 were vacant; the homeowner vacancy rate was 0.0% and the rental vacancy rate was 10.8%.⁶⁶ The plurality of housing units, 232, are 1-unit detached homes. 185 are “20 or more units,” and 114 are “3 or 4 units,” and 97 are 1-unit attached homes.⁶⁷ The vast majority of homes in this census tract were built in 1939 or earlier (460 units); there were 0 units built in 2014 or later and 58 from 2010 to 2013.⁶⁸ The plurality of housing units are 3-bedroom (216), with 193 2-bedroom and 186 1-bedroom.⁶⁹ 321 of the

⁶³ U.S. Census Bureau, “Industry,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP03), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, “Commuting to Work,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP03), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, “Employment Status,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP03), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, “Housing Occupancy,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, “Units in Structure,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “Year Structure Built,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁶⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, “Bedrooms,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205->

units are renter-occupied and 234 are owner-occupied.⁷⁰ 271 of the units were occupied by their current occupant in 2010 or later, with 147 moving in between 2000 and 2009.⁷¹ 218 of these households have one vehicle, 190 have two, 107 have none, and 40 have three or more.⁷²

Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁷⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, "Housing Tenure," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁷¹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Year Householder Moved Into Unit," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁷² U.S. Census Bureau, "Vehicles Available," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.



Figure 3: Corktown's residential neighborhood⁷³

The median value of a house in this census tract is \$172,200, with the plurality (73 out of 234) in the \$200,000-\$299,999 range, followed by 41 in the \$300,000-\$499,999

⁷³ Michelle Gerard and Chris Gerard in Curbed Detroit,
<https://detroit.curbed.com/2017/12/4/16733420/curbed-cup-2017-nominate-detroit-neighborhood>

range, then 39 in the “less than \$50,000 range.”⁷⁴ The median gross rent is \$894, with the plurality (103 out of 308) in the \$1,000-\$1,499 range, followed by 100 in the \$500-\$999 range.⁷⁵



Figure 4: Corktown’s residential neighborhood⁷⁶

⁷⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, “Value,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?id=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁷⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, “Gross Rent,” 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP04), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?id=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP03&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

⁷⁶ Michelle Gerard and Chris Gerard in Curbed Detroit, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2017/6/2/15728892/corktown-neighborhood-tour>.

Corktown today is something of an anomaly in Detroit. While many ethnic neighborhoods became heterogeneous mixtures of Americans, no longer identifiable as having been settled by one ethnicity or another, Corktown is one of the few neighborhoods that have retained some of their cultural roots. While Corktown is racially diverse, its origins as an Irish community are kept alive through churches, festivals, and organizations. The Gaelic League, also known as the Irish American Club of Detroit, “strives to be Metro Detroit’s Center for promoting and preserving Irish Culture and Tradition.”⁷⁷ The neighborhood holds an annual St. Patrick’s Day parade, and there are still bars and restaurants keeping the neighborhood’s Irish roots evident.^{78 79}

⁷⁷ Gaelic League of Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <http://www.gaelicleagueofdetroit.org/>

⁷⁸ “Welcome to the Detroit St. Patrick’s Parade Website,” The St. Patrick’s Parade: A Detroit Tradition, accessed May 1, 2020, <http://www.detroitstpatriksparade.com/>

⁷⁹ “Corktown’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade Is Canceled and Bars Are Worried,” Eater Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://detroit.eater.com/2020/3/11/21175782/corktown-restaurants-bars-st-patricks-day-parade-canceled-detroit-food-drink>



Figure 5: Corktown's main street, Michigan Avenue⁸⁰

To a spectator who cares to see the neighborhood remain much as it is today, there are a number of aspects that are of some concern. One is the location itself. Located directly west of the always-popular downtown, it could be of some concern that as development in the city continues, builders will push the boundaries of downtown and replace the historic, low-rise buildings of surrounding neighborhoods with expensive high-rise apartment buildings and offices. This fear has historic precedent. The reason the location of the Michigan Central Station was chosen was because it was expected that

⁸⁰ Chris Gerard and Michelle Gerard in Curbed Detroit,
<https://detroit.curbed.com/2017/5/8/15579286/spring-into-corktown-new-sculpture>

downtown would spread westward, and that within a short period of time, the train station would be “downtown” as well.⁸¹

There is also the redevelopment of the Michigan Central Station itself. All eyes have been on Corktown ever since Ford announced it was purchasing the building, and Detroiters have been waiting with bated breath to see what becomes of that part of the city after the building is complete. Could this redevelopment change the neighborhood in an irreparable way?

⁸¹ Armando Delicato and Julie Demery, *Detroit's Corktown* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 18.

Chapter 6: The Michigan Central Station as a Parallel to the City

“It was Detroit’s Ellis Island,” the landing place for thousands of new Detroiters eager to work in the growing city.⁸² (Lost Detroit) It welcomed Franklin Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Charlie Chaplin, Harry S Truman, and Herbert Hoover to Detroit.⁸³ The building is located at Michigan Avenue and Vernor, two major thoroughfares in Corktown.⁸⁴ It was operated by the Michigan Central Railroad, “a subsidiary of the New York Central Railroad, which was owned by rail tycoon William Vanderbilt.”⁸⁵

In late 1908, Michigan Central Railroad started buying land in Corktown with the intention of building a new train station to accommodate Detroit’s rapidly growing population.⁸⁶ By 1910, “about fifty acres of property for the depot had been acquired with about three hundred small, wooden-frame homes being bought or condemned.”⁸⁷ “It was said to be the largest real estate transaction in the state at the time” - the city paid “more than \$680,000 (\$14.75 million today, when adjusted for inflation) in condemnation proceedings...to acquire the property for the depot and the land in front of it for Roosevelt Park.”⁸⁸

⁸² Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 103.

⁸³ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 108.

⁸⁴ Arthur M. Woodford, *This Is Detroit: 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 222.

⁸⁵ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 104.

⁸⁶ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 103.

⁸⁷ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 103.

⁸⁸ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 103-104.

Construction started in 1912, “designed by Warren & Wetmore, architects of NYC’s Grand Central Terminal.”⁸⁹ The station was forced to open in December 1913, earlier than planned, as a fire had destroyed Detroit’s old train station.⁹⁰ The fire had started at 2:10pm on December 26; at 5:20pm, the new station’s inaugural train was on its way to Saginaw: “It was a signal achievement, efficiency of the highest possible standard.”⁹¹

The size of the station alone was “meant to be awe-inspiring and make a statement to travelers about the greatness of the city in which they were arriving and the railroad that was bringing them there.”⁹² At the time, “it was the tallest railroad station in the world.”⁹³ “The waiting room was the building’s centerpiece and was modeled after the public baths of ancient Rome...decorated with marble floors, bronze chandeliers, gargantuan sixty-eight foot Corinthian columns and three arched twenty-one- by forty-foot windows flanked by smaller windows ornamented with lovely wrought-iron grilles.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

⁹⁰ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

⁹¹ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 104-106.

⁹² Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 104.

⁹³ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 104.

⁹⁴ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 106.



Figure 6: An image of the Michigan Central Station⁹⁵

⁹⁵ History, <https://www.history.com/news/detroit-comeback-ford-central-station>



Figure 7: The interior of the Michigan Central Station⁹⁶

In the 1920s, Ford actually began to purchase land in the immediate vicinity of the train station, but the Great Depression meant that any plans for the land could not go forward.⁹⁷ By the 1940s, “more than four thousand passengers a day used to cram the cavernous waiting room and fill its twenty-four hardwood and mahogany-finished benches.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ History, <https://www.history.com/news/detroit-comeback-ford-central-station>

⁹⁷ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

⁹⁸ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 108.

As early as the mid-1950s, the number of station users began to decline, and some services began to be cut.⁹⁹ It was reflective of an overall decline in train transportation during the mid-century; “the entire NYC system carried 78 million people in 1945 and only 25 million twenty-two years later.”¹⁰⁰ An attempt was made to sell the train station for \$5 million, but it fell through. In 1967, the station closed the waiting room.¹⁰¹ Around the same time, “the great clock over the ticket window stopped...at one minute to seven.”¹⁰²

Things did start to look up, at least temporarily, in the 1970s. “The 1973 oil crisis gave train travel a boost, and Amtrak [who began running the station in 1971] set out on a plan to clean the place up and modernize it” - they added a bus terminal and spent over a million dollars on improvements.¹⁰³ The train station was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, and the same year, the waiting room was reopened.¹⁰⁴

But these changes couldn’t save the station. The grandeur of the station proved to be part of its demise - as usage declined, Amtrak said they needed a smaller station, and Conrail said they “would try to sell the station - or abandon it.”¹⁰⁵ The station sold but although trains still came and went, the station was beginning to fall apart.¹⁰⁶ The new owners planned to “convert the station into a \$30 million retail and office center,” but the

⁹⁹ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹⁰⁰ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 110.

¹⁰¹ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹⁰² Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 110.

¹⁰³ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 112.

¹⁰⁴ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹⁰⁵ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 112.

¹⁰⁶ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 112.

\$3.25 million in federal money was withdrawn because insufficient progress was made.”¹⁰⁷ The once-magnificent Michigan Central Station was now only a shadow of its former glory.

On January 5, 1988 at 11:30 am, the last train left the train station, headed for Chicago.¹⁰⁸ The station then sat abandoned. Over the years, there were numerous proposed plans for the station. The first attempt came just a year later. Mark Longton, Jr., the first post-abandonment owner, proposed turning it into a casino, but Detroit didn’t allow casinos until 1996.¹⁰⁹ In 1995, the station was purchased by Manuel Moroun’s company, Controlled Terminals Inc., who proposed a plan for restoration, but it too fell through.¹¹⁰ In 2009, the Detroit City Council “vot[ed] to demolish MCS, but an election, budget constraints, and a lawsuit arguing for its historic merit, prevail[ed].”¹¹¹

As a massive, once-beautiful abandoned building, it still continued to attract significant attention. As Detroit became a center for film production following a 2008 state-wide tax credit¹¹² It served as a “backdrop for apocalyptic films like ‘Transformers and ‘The Island’.”¹¹³ When not portraying a post-apocalyptic world, it attracted attention from

¹⁰⁷ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 112.

¹⁰⁸ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹⁰⁹ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 114.

¹¹⁰ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹¹¹ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹¹² Carol Cain, “New Michigan film incentives could bring back Hollywood, jobs and cash,” *Detroit Free Press*, March 1, 2020, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/2020/02/29/michigan-film-incentives-hollywood-michigan/4907143002/>

¹¹³ Louis Aguilar, “Ford aims to keep train station lobby open to public,” *The Detroit News*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/12/ford-train-station-lobby-open-public-detroit-corktown/694614002/?fbclid=IwAR0dC9gZRUuNnXOvnnvUZDHF6uSWmLMMUzEqOyM7jCrLnCWgWuM7SAP2bndY>

looters, who “stole anything of value, such as brass fixtures, copper wiring, decorative railings along balconies and staircases, plaster rosettes from the ceiling and marble from the walls and the bases of columns.”¹¹⁴ Taggers covered the building in graffiti, paintball players held matches inside, and nearly all the building’s windows ended up shattered.¹¹⁵ In a 1998 documentary, a homeless man living in the station said “the kids from (suburbia)...do the graffiti, then when they get done, if they’re bored they start smashing shit up...But they come here because they can’t do it out there (in the suburbs). You get caught spray-painting a garage, you’re going to jail, you know? So they come down here to the inner city, mess everything up, then they go home.”¹¹⁶

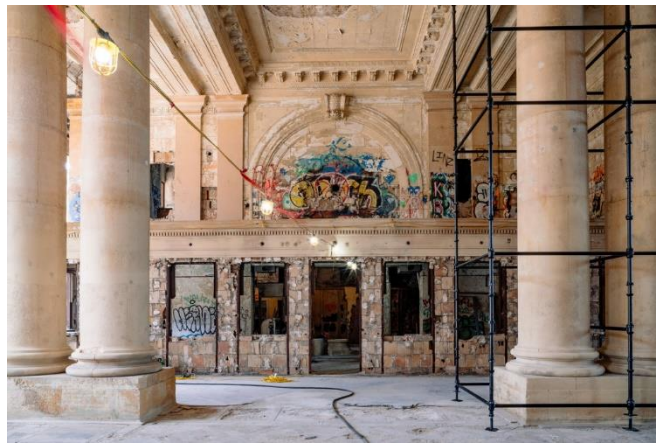


Figure 8: The interior of the abandoned Michigan Central Station¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 114.

¹¹⁵ Dan Austin, *Lost Detroit: Stories Behind the Motor City’s Majestic Ruins* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 114.

¹¹⁶ “Michigan Central Station,” Historic Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.historicdetroit.org/buildings/michigan-central-station>

¹¹⁷ Nick Hagen in The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/17/business/ford-detroit-station.html>



Figure 9: The abandoned train station¹¹⁸

As the city began to make a turn for the better in the 2010s, Detroiters saw a symbolic victory in 2015, when the owners of the station agreed to replace the windows of the train station, most of which had been long gone.¹¹⁹ The same year, a new elevator was installed; perhaps, tellingly, one with the capacity to “transport heavy construction materials and machinery to the top floors.”¹²⁰ They were the first signs that something big was about to happen.

¹¹⁸ CBS News, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ford-buys-michigan-central-depot-detroit-train-station-2018-06-11/>

¹¹⁹ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹²⁰ Amber Ainsworth, “Unfinished plans and demolition fears: A look at Michigan Central Station’s uncertain past,” *Click on Detroit*, February 13, 2020, <https://www.clickondetroit.com/features/2020/02/14/unfinished-plans-and-demolition-fears-a-look-at-michigan-central-stations-uncertain-past/>.

Chapter 7: The Ford Motor Company Purchases the Michigan Central Station

In 2018, the Ford Motor Company announced that it had purchased the Michigan Central Station, and intended to make it “the anchor of a 1.2-million-square-foot Detroit campus focused on developing self-driving vehicles.”¹²¹ The announcement was immensely symbolic. Transportation advancements had rendered the train station useless in the late 1980s, and transportation advancements were bringing it back in the late 2010s. Crain’s Detroit Business reported that the auto company paid \$90 million for the station, which, as the station is 600,000 square feet, means \$150 a square foot.¹²²

Ford also purchased some currently-vacant land, a former factory that made hosiery, a book depository, formerly owned by the Detroit Public Schools, and an old brass factory.¹²³ The hosiery building, or “The Factory,” as Ford is referring to it, is the Corktown building where Ford began the renovation process. Ford had already moved 220 workers into the building by 2018.¹²⁴ Beginning in the spring of that year, “Ford’s dedicated electric vehicle organization (Team Edison) and autonomous vehicle business teams have been based at The Factory.”¹²⁵ The building is located about three blocks away from the train station, on Michigan Avenue. The book depository will be “renovated into offices,

¹²¹ “Michigan Central Station,” Historic Detroit, accessed February 15, 2020, <https://historicdetroit.org/buildings/michigan-central-station>

¹²² Benjamin Raven, “Ford paid \$90M for once-doomed Michigan Central Station in Detroit,” *M Live*, January 29, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/auto/2018/09/ford_train_station_90m.html

¹²³ Benjamin Raven, “Ford paid \$90M for once-doomed Michigan Central Station in Detroit,” *M Live*, January 29, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/auto/2018/09/ford_train_station_90m.html

¹²⁴ Louis Aguilar, “Ford aims to keep train station lobby open to public,” *The Detroit News*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/12/ford-train-station-lobby-open-public-detroit-corktown/694614002/?fbclid=IwAR0dC9gZRuNnXOvnnvUZDHF6uSWmLMMUzEqOyM7jCrLnCWgWuM7SAP2bndY>

¹²⁵ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

residential, and retail.”¹²⁶ Early plans for the brass factory stated that it would “be demolished to make room for about 247,500 square feet of office space, and 42,500 square feet of commercial space.”¹²⁷



Figure 10: A map of Ford’s Corktown projects¹²⁸

\$740 million is the current number to create Ford’s new Corktown campus, and it is estimated that 2,500 employees will work at the train station site.¹²⁹ Ford proposes a total job creation number of 5,000 - “2,500 from Ford and 2,500 from our business

¹²⁶ “12 developments set to transform Detroit,” Curbed Detroit, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/maps/biggest-developments-in-detroit-transform>

¹²⁷ Benjamin Raven, “Ford paid \$90M for once-doomed Michigan Central Station in Detroit,” *M Live*, January 29, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/auto/2018/09/ford_train_station_90m.html

¹²⁸ Ford, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹²⁹ Benjamin Raven, “Ford paid \$90M for once-doomed Michigan Central Station in Detroit,” *M Live*, January 29, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/auto/2018/09/ford_train_station_90m.html

partners.”¹³⁰ They hope to make it “a ‘magnet for high-tech talent and a regional destination with modern workspaces, retail, restaurants, residential living, and more’.”¹³¹

The goal of this project is not preservation, at least not for the majority of the building: “While historical preservation of the front waiting room is the priority, the rest of the hulking structure has to be adapted to modern use for office workers, retail, restaurants and possibly a hotel or residential space in the top two floors.”¹³² The plan is to “convert it into use for the future - and not just a museum where we’re preserving the thing the way it was a hundred years ago,” said Richard Hess, “principal of Washington, D.C.-based Quinn Evans Architects, which is Ford’s design contractor for the project.”¹³³

It takes a lot to bring a century-old train station back from the brink of condemnation. The process has been divided into multiple steps. The first included “remov[ing] 227,000 gallons of water from the basement [and] 3,600 cubic yards of debris.”¹³⁴ There was also significant stabilization and winterization that needed to be done.¹³⁵ They had to “restore 1,184 tower windows ‘to preserve the station’s historic appearance’.”¹³⁶ In 2019, Ford said, “workers will spend the next two to three years

¹³⁰ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹³¹ Benjamin Raven, “Ford paid \$90M for once-doomed Michigan Central Station in Detroit,” *M Live*, January 29, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/auto/2018/09/ford_train_station_90m.html

¹³² “Ford goes back to the future in Corktown,” Crain’s Detroit Business, accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/property-development/ford-goes-back-future-corktown>

¹³³ “Ford goes back to the future in Corktown,” Crain’s Detroit Business, accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.crainsdetroit.com/property-development/ford-goes-back-future-corktown>

¹³⁴ Benjamin Raven, “Update on historic train station’s transformation into Ford’s Detroit campus,” *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹³⁵ Benjamin Raven, “Update on historic train station’s transformation into Ford’s Detroit campus,” *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹³⁶ Benjamin Raven, “Update on historic train station’s transformation into Ford’s Detroit campus,” *M Live*, May 23, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations->

removing bricks to fix the steel framework that sits behind, then cleaning, repointing and replacing the damaged terracotta, limestone and brick that make up the station's exterior."¹³⁷ Although the building sat without a roof for many years, the ceiling of the station is in good shape, and workers have "installed a temporary roof to protect the arches from further deterioration and [they] will now be working to install a new copper roof."¹³⁸ The article said that "crews will clean the Gustavino tiles that can be restored and replace the ones that need replacing...Ford says that crews will use original drawings and blueprints as reference when making the molds to replicate the artisan pieces."¹³⁹

Another step, which will be completed in 2021, focuses "on masonry repairs and the steel structure of the train station."¹⁴⁰ Since its abandonment in 1988, the station had sat through three decades of Michigan winters, creating a "'rain and freeze-thaw effect'...which caused existing cracks in the exterior masonry to expand at a quicker rate over the years."¹⁴¹

transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹³⁷ Benjamin Raven, "Update on historic train station's transformation into Ford's Detroit campus," *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹³⁸ Benjamin Raven, "Update on historic train station's transformation into Ford's Detroit campus," *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹³⁹ Benjamin Raven, "Update on historic train station's transformation into Ford's Detroit campus," *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin Raven, "Update on historic train station's transformation into Ford's Detroit campus," *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

¹⁴¹ Benjamin Raven, "Update on historic train station's transformation into Ford's Detroit campus," *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

So what will it all look like when it's completed? For the train station itself, "early conceptual renderings show the main lobby open as a community gathering spot with local retail and restaurant offerings, while a European-style market with food and retail vendors would occupy the atrium space."¹⁴² Ford would occupy the floors in the middle of the building, while the floors at the top will be either a hotel or loft apartments. The book depository building will feature "maker space" on the ground floor and "workspace" above.¹⁴³ The building is expected to be completed by 2021.¹⁴⁴

"As for work already taking place in Detroit and the Corktown neighborhood, the automaker announced the launch of a self-driving fleet with Argo AI recently. The new Ford Fusion Hybrid is a third-generation test vehicle that Argo AI is now deploying in collaboration with Ford in all five major cities of operation: Pittsburgh, Palo Alto, Miami, Washington, D.C., and now Detroit – where Ford is expanding testing beyond Dearborn. On top of this, Ford says it launched a ride-hailing pilot program – GoRide – back in December [2018] and expanded its Spin electric scooters to Corktown. Later this month, the automaker says it will launch the "City: One Challenge" that will aim to crowdsource residents, businesses and community groups for pilot solutions and improving mobility."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Tanya Moutzalias, "Ford train station celebration set to unveil future of automaker's Detroit campus," *M Live*, January 30, 2019,

https://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/2018/06/ford_corktown_celebration.html?fbclid=IwAR3yChtU-YKozIW96X54KDZqcK8YqZWpiBeRgyXwNedzyxisSy0hFtlg0Jo

¹⁴³ "Michigan Central Station to be powered by renewable energy," *Curbed Detroit*, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2019/4/4/18295346/michigan-central-station-ford-community-meeting-energy>

¹⁴⁴ "Michigan Central Station to be powered by renewable energy," *Curbed Detroit*, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2019/4/4/18295346/michigan-central-station-ford-community-meeting-energy>

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin Raven, "Ford opens information center near train station in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood," *M Live*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/06/ford-opens-information-center-near-train-station-in-detroits-corktown-neighborhood.html?fbclid=IwAR3bSoshnVp-J93AUy3Vm5wozsT25K1I1j0vrKMU4c-xwdZgGakIV2An8RY>



Figure 11: Renderings of what the station will look like¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Autonews, <https://www.autonews.com/article/20180617/OEM02/180619775/ford-plots-future-in-a-relic-of-detroit-s-past>

Chapter 8: Threats and Challenges

One doesn't need to look back to the Renaissance Center to find other landmark developments in Detroit. Other recent projects have raised concerns amongst preservationists. Perhaps the most notable is the development of the Little Caesars Arena, the current home of the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Pistons, which also serves as a concert and event venue. Many Metro Detroiters blame the Ilitch family, who own both the Detroit Red Wings and Detroit Tigers, Little Caesars Pizza, and numerous entertainment venues in the city.¹⁴⁷ They purchased land around the arena with the promise of developing it into a "dynamic mix of shopping and dining" in the heart of Detroit's entertainment district; instead, seven years later, 30 of the area's buildings have been torn down and 40 sit still abandoned, and where historic buildings once stood lay parking lots, where the Ilitches charge as much as \$50 to park.¹⁴⁸ It serves as a sore spot for city residents, who see it as a promise unkept, and which was referenced in some of my interviews by residents who fear the same fate could come to Corktown.

The redevelopment of the sites in Corktown are not isolated projects. When the station reopens in 2022, it will cause more growth and development in the surrounding areas. Much has already occurred in Corktown already. The neighborhood has been in a state of progress for years. Before the train station project was even announced, hip new businesses had long been moving into historic buildings on Michigan Avenue. Many new

¹⁴⁷ Louis Aguilar, "HBO Sports examines undeveloped promises around Little Caesars Arena," *The Detroit News*, April 22, 2019, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2019/04/22/hbo-show-little-caesars-arena-detroit-ilitch/3537834002/>

¹⁴⁸ Tom Perkins, "Big promises for a thriving urban core in Detroit vanish in a swath of parking lots," *The Guardian*, October 8, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/08/detroit-the-district-redevelopment-ilitch-companies>

projects unrelated to Ford have popped up over the past few years, suggesting a Corktown that is already in the midst of change.

The Corner is a recent development on the site of the former home of the Detroit Tigers, Tiger Stadium.¹⁴⁹ It is a “111-unit mixed use structure” surrounding a baseball field, featuring a very modern “maroon and gray panelled facade.”¹⁵⁰ It is also one of the developments mentioned by one of the Corktowners I spoke with last summer as an example of new buildings that don’t fit in with the old character of the neighborhood. In our conversation, she told me that the community and developer had struck up an agreement regarding the look of the building, but that the developer went back on their word, and they then had to hold a meeting to address the “misconduct.”

Elton Park is another recent Corktown development. The mayor of Detroit, Mike Duggan, said, “What had been for years a sea of parking lots and a large vacant building is now a beautiful new residential anchor and public space in Detroit’s oldest neighborhood.”¹⁵¹ Infill development has been a topic of much relevance regarding Corktown’s recent changes, and new buildings on vacant lots are not necessarily exempt from criticism regarding a change to the neighborhood’s character. This development, however, did utilize an extant vacant building, as well as developing housing designed to look like “Irish row houses.”¹⁵²

With Detroit’s recent economic improvement and fast-paced construction, it didn’t require Ford’s involvement with the train station to kickstart development in Corktown.

¹⁴⁹ “The Corner Detroit,” The Corner Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <http://thecornerdetroit.com/>

¹⁵⁰ “‘The Corner’ at old Tiger Stadium site officially opens,” Curbed Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2019/9/26/20885089/the-corner-tiger-stadium-open-corktown-detroit>

¹⁵¹ “Massive \$150M mixed-use development in Corktown officially opens,” Curbed Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2019/9/5/20851053/elton-park-corktown-tumbull-detroit-apartments>

¹⁵² “Massive \$150M mixed-use development in Corktown officially opens,” Curbed Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2019/9/5/20851053/elton-park-corktown-tumbull-detroit-apartments>

Thus, while the new development will bring people and businesses to the area, it is important to keep in mind that not every change that comes to Corktown in the next few years is necessarily a direct result of the Michigan Central Station project.

Chapter 9: Ford's Information Center

In 2019, Ford announced that it would be opening an information center about the development.¹⁵³ This information center would be located in Corktown on Michigan Avenue, and would provide the public with a physical space displaying “updates on the development, including construction progress, site planning, mobility solutions and community initiatives, events and activations.”¹⁵⁴ The information center is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4-7pm and on Saturdays from 12-4pm.¹⁵⁵ They stated that this center “will provide an ongoing opportunity to share our plans, celebrate the culture of the area and continue learning from the community.”¹⁵⁶ Speaking to the history of the community, they said that, “in this historic neighborhood, we’re building a place where people can solve real-world challenges and create future opportunities together.”¹⁵⁷ They also stated that “the windows of the information center on Michigan Avenue will transform into a ‘revolving gallery’ featuring work from local artists throughout the year.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Benjamin Raven, “Ford opens information center near train station in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood,” *M Live*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/06/ford-opens-information-center-near-train-station-in-detroits-corktown-neighborhood.html?fbclid=IwAR3bSoshnVp-J93AUy3Vm5wozsT25K1I1j0vrKMU4c-xwdZgGakIV2An8RY>

¹⁵⁴ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹⁵⁵ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

¹⁵⁶ Benjamin Raven, “Ford opens information center near train station in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood,” *M Live*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/06/ford-opens-information-center-near-train-station-in-detroits-corktown-neighborhood.html?fbclid=IwAR3bSoshnVp-J93AUy3Vm5wozsT25K1I1j0vrKMU4c-xwdZgGakIV2An8RY>

¹⁵⁷ Benjamin Raven, “Ford opens information center near train station in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood,” *M Live*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/06/ford-opens-information-center-near-train-station-in-detroits-corktown-neighborhood.html?fbclid=IwAR3bSoshnVp-J93AUy3Vm5wozsT25K1I1j0vrKMU4c-xwdZgGakIV2An8RY>

¹⁵⁸ Benjamin Raven, “Ford opens information center near train station in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood,” *M Live*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/06/ford-opens-information-center-near-train-station-in-detroits-corktown-neighborhood.html?fbclid=IwAR3bSoshnVp-J93AUy3Vm5wozsT25K1I1j0vrKMU4c-xwdZgGakIV2An8RY>

I had the opportunity to visit this information center in July of 2019. The first thing I noticed was the location. Parking was in the back, and as I parked my car on the small street on the other side of the block, the Michigan Central Station appeared in full view. Its location both in view of the development itself and on a corner of the main thoroughfare of Corktown is certainly not an accident.

Upon entering the information center I noticed that right by the door was an iPad with a Google survey entitled “Michigan Central Information Center Feedback.” It asked questions like “Do you have a better understanding of Ford’s vision for the Michigan Central development?”, “Was the Info Center organized in an easy to follow manner?” and “What additional content would you like to see at the Information Center?”. There was a large wall that invited guest participation, that said “Share your ideas, stories, concerns, hopes, and dreams for the neighborhood.” It had notecards with prompts like “My favorite memory...”, “What does mobility mean to me...”, “I am most proud of...”, and “My favorite thing to do...”. The wall was already filled with participants’ notecards, with their thoughts and opinions. There was a small newsstand with copies of Ford’s community newsletter in both English and Spanish.



Figure 12: The wall of community opinions

And this was only walking 15 feet into the building. On one wall, entitled “Creating Tomorrow Together,” was a line that I felt represented a thread sewn throughout my research. It said, “Together, we can harness new technologies to reimagine transportation so that it works better for all of us - right here in Detroit, the birthplace of mobility.” This line stood out to me because I recalled Corktown’s history: the Irish immigrants working initially as draymen for horse-drawn wagons in the 19th century, then the factory workers

in the myriad automotive factories in the 20th century, and now, developing high-tech automotive transit of the future in the 21st century.

One wall had a timeline, starting in 1893, showing Ford's history. "For more than a century, Ford and Detroit have worked together to turn local ideas, inspiration, and hard work into an engine that drives human progress. As we enter a new era of change in transportation, Detroit and Ford's Michigan Central development will be the place where new mobility solutions and innovations are created," the wall said.

Throughout the information center, there were columns with information about the development. One had information about the Ford Fund, the "corporate foundation and philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company." Another had flyers with local events, some of which, like outdoor family movie nights, were sponsored by Ford, others of which, like a children's theatre camp and a free bike program for children, were hosted by local businesses or organizations. Most of the columns were about the development, though. There were columns for each part of the project. For example, the column for the book depository project, now called "The Post," provided history of the building, including the 1987 fire that left the building abandoned for years, as well as a rendering of the proposed design of the building, with potential programming uses for each floor. The column for the brass factory, which was then in the demolition process, had a breakdown of each phase of the project, the schedule for the next few months, and a map of the demolition of each part of the building and time that each part would be in the demolition process. Many of the columns had informational maps; a sound map, a traffic flow map, a map of each location of the air quality monitors in the area.

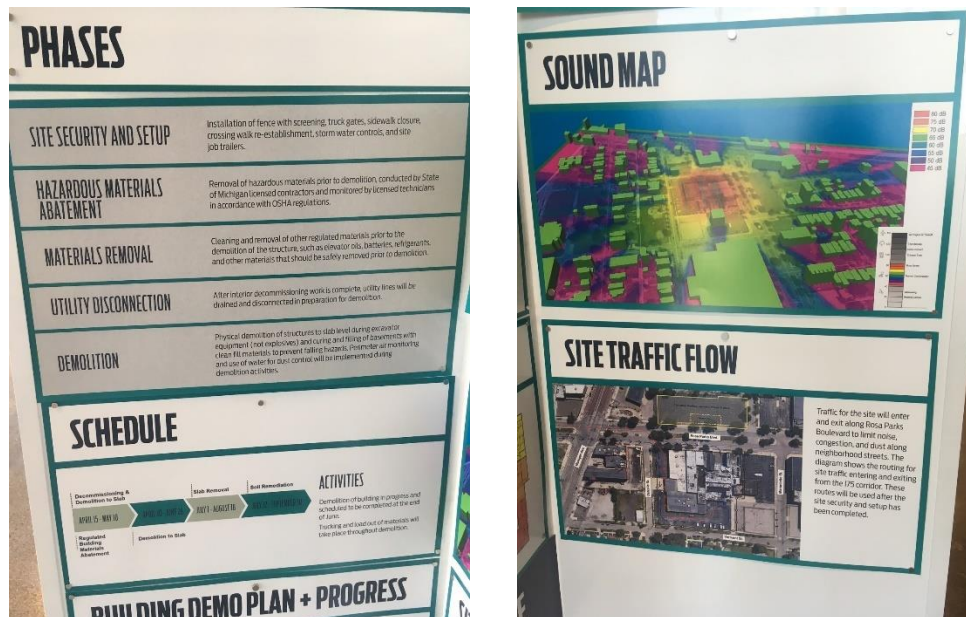


Figure 13 and 14: Two columns featuring information about the development

Another section of the information center was just a little section set up like a museum, with some of the artifacts from the original building. Everywhere in this center it was apparent the extent to which Ford wants to make themselves accessible to those who may be affected by this project. It wasn't until I was going through the photos I had taken during my visit months later as I was writing this paper that I noticed just how many of the columns had in large letters "CONSTRUCTION HOTLINE" or "DEMOLITION HOTLINE" with phone numbers that anyone could call to ask questions or get information. A large wall had a phone number and email address that people could use to voice more general comments or concerns, or ask questions. There was, as I mentioned earlier, the iPad at the doorway asking for feedback about the center. There was contact information for people who wanted to post a community event. There was contact information for people who wanted to apply for a Ford Fund grant.

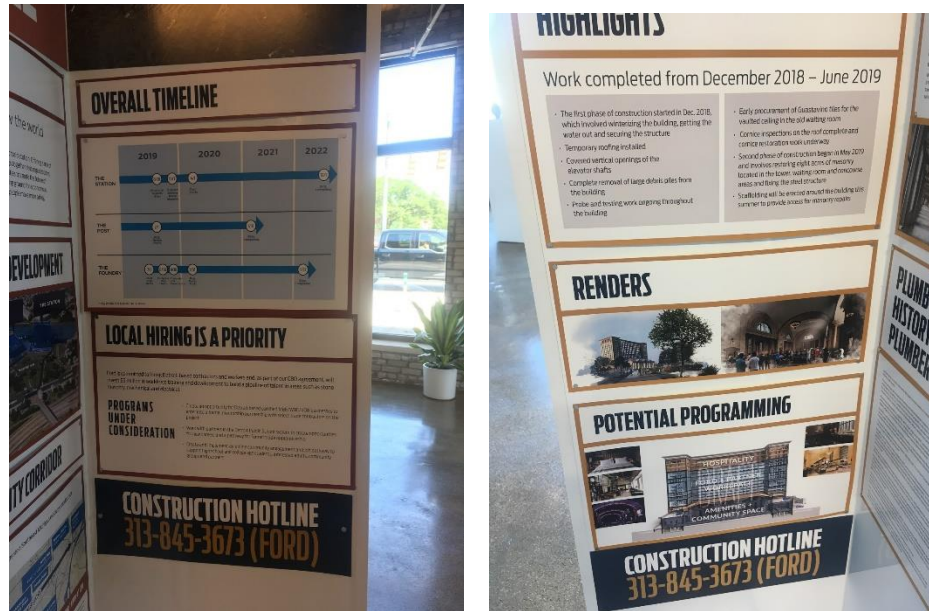


Figure 15 and 16: Two columns featuring information about the development

I had never heard of a place like this being set up to inform the community about a project in any other major development. It was positive to see the depth and breadth of information provided to the public. It appeared to be accessible and understandable even to those without a planning or architecture background.

Chapter 10: The Community Benefits Ordinance

One of the most important things that Ford is doing is the Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO, referred to in other cities as a Community Benefits Agreement, or CBA). This is a project mandated by the city of Detroit, in which Ford is required to work with the community to create a set of guidelines that will follow throughout the duration of the project. The ordinance is designed to create a mutually beneficial partnership between the organization conducting a major project in the community and the community members. For example, during the construction of a new practice facility of the Detroit Pistons basketball team, it was agreed that the organization would provide, amongst other benefits, “\$2.5 million for 60 outdoor basketball courts throughout the city,” a “City of Detroit Resident Employment plan to ensure the facility hires as many Detroiters as possible,” “20,000 tickets per season for regular season games, free of charge, through the City of Detroit for residents and youth,” and the “continuation of a Neighborhood Advisory Committee to facilitate community engagement.”¹⁵⁹ A mixed-used development on the site of a former recreation center included such benefits in their CBO as “restoration of street grid to reconnect to neighborhood to the extent possible,” “work with Motor City Match to identify local entrepreneurs for retail space,” “commitment to deeper affordability” (done through commitments to designating a certain percentage of the units at variable percentages of the Wayne County AMI), and “commitments to green space,” including a public park, “public access to pedestrian walkways and open space,” and a “public design

¹⁵⁹ “Community Benefits List, accessed May 1, 2020, https://www.dropbox.com/s/g6wyoh9lrb3z5pu/Community_Benefits_List.pdf?dl=0.

process” for the park space.^{160 161} This is a relatively new law, “approved by Detroit voters in 2016,” so it remains to be seen how successful this process has been and will be in the long run.¹⁶²

Detroit is not the first or only city to implement a process like this for development projects. The first was the 2001 development of the Staples Center in Los Angeles, which would have impacts on surrounding working-class areas.¹⁶³ Ultimately, the developer and the community agreed to a number of community benefits such as “local hiring and job training programs and the creation of a residential parking program.”¹⁶⁴

Another such program took place in Brooklyn. The Atlantic Yards development began in 2003, and a year and a half later, a number of community benefits had been agreed upon, including “small business development” and “affordable housing.”¹⁶⁵ This CBA was more controversial from the start, as the project was announced before half of the community signatories were on board, and the agreement’s informal nature (being that it had “not been adopted into any part of the disposition or development agreements between the public sector and the developer”) meant that it was unclear how enforceable the

¹⁶⁰ “Midtown West to bring residential, retail, park to Wigle Recreation Center site,” Curbed Detroit, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://detroit.curbed.com/2017/4/27/15454256/midtown-wigle-recreation-center-develop>

¹⁶¹ “Community Benefits List, accessed May 1, 2020, https://www.dropbox.com/s/g6wyoh9lrb3z5pu/Community_Benefits_List.pdf?dl=0.

¹⁶² “Community Benefits Ordinance,” City of Detroit, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/zoning-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance>

¹⁶³ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 20.

¹⁶⁴ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 21.

¹⁶⁵ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 24.

agreement really is.¹⁶⁶ The project proved to be controversial, and a 2016 article from Curbed New York profiled the now-renamed Pacific Park; delays had piled up due to “lawsuits, arguments over eminent domain, financial setbacks (thanks to the 2008 recession), and an extremely dedicated opposition effort.”¹⁶⁷ Although construction did eventually begin, it proved that CBAs don’t necessarily indicate a project’s success, nor do they prevent controversy.¹⁶⁸

Current planning scholarship views community benefits agreements as instruments to give communities more agency in development projects. The article “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes” says that this process is meant to address the interests of the three stakeholder groups in the development process: public officials, private developers, and community groups.¹⁶⁹ According to the article, “public officials often struggle to provide public services while trying to maintain and grow a healthy tax base. Private developers need to meet fiscal obligations while at the same time maintaining a reputation that will allow them to continue operating in the locales that they work. Community groups want to preserve the character of their neighborhoods while increasing services and improving quality of life.”¹⁷⁰ These processes allow a unified representative group for the community to go “up

¹⁶⁶ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 25.

¹⁶⁷ “A decade on, Brooklyn’s Pacific Park megaproject is finally realized,” Curbed New York, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://ny.curbed.com/2016/8/18/12417328/pacific-park-brooklyn-megaproject-update>

¹⁶⁸ “A decade on, Brooklyn’s Pacific Park megaproject is finally realized,” Curbed New York, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://ny.curbed.com/2016/8/18/12417328/pacific-park-brooklyn-megaproject-update>

¹⁶⁹ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 8.

¹⁷⁰ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 8.

against” the developers.¹⁷¹ Some scholars address faults with the process, however. One article suggests that organized labor groups can “often wield disproportionate power in the informal negotiations underlying the formation of a CBA, and have structured CBAs so as to avoid the preemptive effects of federal labor law.”¹⁷² This, the article says, may make the agreement less equitable and inclusive.¹⁷³

Throughout the CBO engagement process for the train station development, there were a total of eight meetings with more than 500 attendees over the course of three months.¹⁷⁴ The community identified six impacts they wanted to see Ford have on the community as a result of this project. They are:

- “Local Hiring and Job Training
- Respect the Culture and People of the Neighborhood
- Improve Mass Transit
- Preserve and Invest in Affordable Housing
- Prioritize Small Businesses and Buy Local
- Use Local Contractors”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ William Ho, “Community Benefits Agreements: An Evolution in Public Benefits Negotiation Processes,” *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. ½ (Fall 2007/Winter 2008): 8.

¹⁷² Steven M. Seigel, “Community Benefits Agreements in a Union City: How the Structure of CBAs May Result in Inefficient, Unfair Land Use Decisions,” *The Urban Lawyer* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 419.

¹⁷³ Steven M. Seigel, “Community Benefits Agreements in a Union City: How the Structure of CBAs May Result in Inefficient, Unfair Land Use Decisions,” *The Urban Lawyer* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 419.

¹⁷⁴ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁷⁵ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

Ford then identified eight goals of their own:

- “Preserve and Invest in Affordable Housing - \$2.5 Million
- Support Workforce Development - \$5 Million
- Continued Engagement with the Community
- Mitigate Construction Impacts
- Support Neighborhood Development - \$2.5 Million
- Support & Prevent Displacement of Local Small Businesses
- Engage Residents in Mobility Planning & Development
- Additional Benefits Requested by the Community”¹⁷⁶

After the meeting, the benefits package that has been negotiated between the Neighborhood Advisory Council and the developer is finalized.¹⁷⁷ The Neighborhood Advisory Council then signs a “letter of support,” and then a “development package [is] submitted to City Council along with Community Benefits Report & Community Benefits Provisions signed by the developer.”¹⁷⁸ Finally, on October 26, 2018, the “City Council

¹⁷⁶ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁷⁷ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁷⁸ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

approved [the] incentives request.”¹⁷⁹ During the enforcement period following the approval, the “PDD hosts annual check-ins with the NAC and developer.”¹⁸⁰ The provision “remains in effect throughout the duration of the project,” and Detroit’s “Civil Rights, Inclusion and Opportunity Department (CRIO) leads enforcement and monitoring.”¹⁸¹

Ford has expressed five “guiding principles for the development,” which they discussed at their annual community benefits meeting on December 10, 2019, but that have also been posted in other locations, such as at their information center.¹⁸² They are:

- “Optimize for Innovation
- Build the Future of Mobility
- Contribute to an Inclusive and Authentic Place
- Celebrate Heritage and Legacy
- Make Decisions That Support Equitable Outcomes”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁸⁰ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁸¹ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁸² “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁸³ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

During their December 2019 meeting, Ford presented on current and future plans.¹⁸⁴ This included a map of their site planning for potential parking garages, as well as concept drawings of areas around the station, such as a plot of land next to the station that is currently pavement that they propose turning into a site for food trucks, and a proposed greenway for some of the current tracks behind the station.¹⁸⁵ The presentation also included updates on their part of the Community Benefits Provision. Under individual headings, they broke down what they have been doing to ensure their side is upheld. For example, under the heading “Construction Impacts - Considerations for Residents” they had bullet points such as “Established a telephone hotline and online portal for concerns and updates,” “Adopted standard construction hours and provided a seven-day notice for scheduled overtime,” and “Expanded the sidewalk on Rosa Parks Blvd.”¹⁸⁶ By doing this, they provided a more measurable way to determine whether they had met their goals; one can more easily say whether Ford has “expanded a sidewalk” than simply “taken residents into consideration.”

¹⁸⁴ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁸⁵ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

¹⁸⁶ “Ford Corktown Projects & Michigan Central Station: Annual Community Benefits Update Meeting,” City of Detroit, accessed March 28, 2020, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2019-12/Ford-Corktown%20and%20Michigan%20Central%20Station%202019%20Annual%20Meeting_12%2010%2019.pdf

Chapter 11: Opinions and Concerns

Prior to my discussions with Corktown locals, it was already easy to find opinions voiced by residents who were both hopeful and concerned about the redevelopment. Ryan Cooley opened Slow's Barbecue in 2005, "at a particularly bleak moment for the neighborhood."¹⁸⁷ He said that, "when we first got there, we played bocce ball in front of the train station, and we had to mow the grass ourselves to play. It's going to be a lot different now."¹⁸⁸ John Muster, the owner of Quality Meats and Culinary Specialties, said, "This is something that will help small businesses flourish."¹⁸⁹

The story of one individual's response to the news of the redevelopment proved inspirational to many locals, and was even received national attention. During the train station's decades of abandonment, many looters had stripped the building of anything potentially valuable, including the station's gateway clock.¹⁹⁰ In June 2018, an anonymous individual called the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, a Detroit suburb, "saying that the depot clock existed and wanted to 'go home'."¹⁹¹ They then communicated with the Ford Motor Land Development Corp. via text and led workers to where they left the clock; the workers "found the package carefully wrapped in moving blankets leaning against the wall

¹⁸⁷ Nora Naughton, "Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival," *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

¹⁸⁸ Nora Naughton, "Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival," *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

¹⁸⁹ Nora Naughton, "Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival," *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

¹⁹⁰ Phoebe Wall Howard, "Thief returns train station clock, thanks Ford for believing in Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/ford/2018/06/18/thief-returns-detroit-train-station-stolen-clock/710459002/>

¹⁹¹ Phoebe Wall Howard, "Thief returns train station clock, thanks Ford for believing in Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/ford/2018/06/18/thief-returns-detroit-train-station-stolen-clock/710459002/>

in an overgrown lot with abandoned tires.”¹⁹² The anonymous individual later texted Ford “Thank you so much. I loved that clock and I loved that station.”¹⁹³ Steve Dubensky, CEO of the Land Development Corp., reached out to the community and provided a phone number for others to call, saying, “This shows just how much emotion is attached to what we’re doing...We’d like to ask any others who might have a piece of history and want to return to please call, no questions asked. We’ll come get the pieces anywhere, anytime.”¹⁹⁴

Following Ford’s 2018 celebration event at the train station, the Detroit Free Press spoke with a few Corktown residents who had held a discussion later that day. The key theme boiled down to “Will Ford’s campus be an oasis in Corktown, or a part of the community?”¹⁹⁵ Debra Walker, who lives in Corktown and is “a community organizer,” said, “We’re diverse socially, economically, racially. Salaries are not going to increase at the same rate as the property.”¹⁹⁶ She said that “she sees the company as ‘socially responsible,’ [but] the need to engage the community and talk about the past and future felt critical.”¹⁹⁷ Raquel Castaneda-Lopez, a city councilwoman, was also in attendance at the

¹⁹² Phoebe Wall Howard, “Thief returns train station clock, thanks Ford for believing in Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/ford/2018/06/18/thief-returns-detroit-train-station-stolen-clock/710459002/>

¹⁹³ Phoebe Wall Howard, “Thief returns train station clock, thanks Ford for believing in Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/ford/2018/06/18/thief-returns-detroit-train-station-stolen-clock/710459002/>

¹⁹⁴ Phoebe Wall Howard, “Thief returns train station clock, thanks Ford for believing in Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/ford/2018/06/18/thief-returns-detroit-train-station-stolen-clock/710459002/>

¹⁹⁵ Allie Gross, “Corktown residents gather to digest the big news of Ford’s move into train station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/06/19/corktown-residents-gather-digest-big-news-fords-move-into-train-station/715114002/>

¹⁹⁶ Allie Gross, “Corktown residents gather to digest the big news of Ford’s move into train station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/06/19/corktown-residents-gather-digest-big-news-fords-move-into-train-station/715114002/>

¹⁹⁷ Allie Gross, “Corktown residents gather to digest the big news of Ford’s move into train station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/06/19/corktown-residents-gather-digest-big-news-fords-move-into-train-station/715114002/>

meeting, and said the best way to get their ideas heard by Ford would be to form “a neighborhood advisory council that Ford would be obligated to meet with.”¹⁹⁸ She said, “The hope is Ford will be a part of that conversation to work in partnership, not necessarily dominate and dictate what happens.”¹⁹⁹ She said that she had already had a conversation with Ford, who discussed new restaurants, but she suggested a gym, dry cleaner, or daycare center - “things that meet the needs of the people who live here, which is a different way to approach it than a tourist destination.”²⁰⁰ It is hard to say whether Ford will seriously consider this approach. Though it would likely be better for the current residents of the neighborhood, their focus does seem to be local businesses, though still those that would be more attractive to Corktown visitors.

The potential changing demographics coming to the neighborhood are also polarizing locals. A Detroit News article from June of 2018 referred to one of their interviewees, a “30-year-old suburbanite-turned-Detroiter” as “part of the demographic Ford is hoping to capture with its move to the city’s oldest neighborhood: a small grassroots off-shoot of Detroit’s revival buoyed by a hip restaurant scene and funky independent retailers.”²⁰¹ The individual’s father was said to have “watched his suburban-bred daughter

¹⁹⁸ Allie Gross, “Corktown residents gather to digest the big news of Ford’s move into train station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/06/19/corktown-residents-gather-digest-big-news-fords-move-into-train-station/715114002/>

¹⁹⁹ Allie Gross, “Corktown residents gather to digest the big news of Ford’s move into train station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/06/19/corktown-residents-gather-digest-big-news-fords-move-into-train-station/715114002/>

²⁰⁰ Allie Gross, “Corktown residents gather to digest the big news of Ford’s move into train station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2018/06/19/corktown-residents-gather-digest-big-news-fords-move-into-train-station/715114002/>

²⁰¹ Nora Naughton, “Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival,” *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

and her friends retake the city during the recession.”²⁰² The article said that Ford is “hoping that Corktown’s local hipster cred and Detroit’s nationwide revival cred will help attract young talent with skills in mobile technology, software development and cloud infrastructure.”²⁰³ This obviously conjures up in one’s mind a demographic expressly desired “young, well-educated,” but that silently brings with it other qualifications - “white or Asian, middle-class or richer.” This is not Ford’s official position, of course. It’s simply an insinuation made by a newspaper article. But some Corktown residents in the article seem to see through it. One life-long Detroit resident in the article said, “It’s nothing more than the continuing gentrification of Detroit...This is pushing black bodies out of Detroit...pushing a corporate agenda as opposed to taking care of (Detroit) citizens.”²⁰⁴ I was reminded of the quote from the homeless man who lived in the abandoned station in the late 1990s, who spoke of the suburbanites who came to the city to trash it, then went to their comfortable, wealthy homes. Twenty years later, the suburbanites find the city trendy, and some feel they are pushing out those who were there before.

The quote struck me as quite jarring in contrast to the other opinions I had been hearing about the development. I realized that to a large extent those I had heard such positivity from were white, and many were not even originally from the city. Even when I later spoke with a (white) city resident, she voiced a similar idea that Detroit was more interested in new residents than old ones. Since so many of the new residents are white, and so many old ones are black, it is definitely worth mentioning that, even if it is not the

²⁰² Nora Naughton, “Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival,” *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

²⁰³ Nora Naughton, “Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival,” *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

²⁰⁴ Nora Naughton, “Corktown neighbors brace for Ford arrival,” *The Detroit News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/11/detroit-corktown-ford-train-station-reaction/690493002/>

city's intent, there is a potentially racially unequal effect of focusing on new residents over long-time Detroiters. Although Corktown has more white residents than any other race, this does not mean that negative effects of the redevelopment could not disproportionately affect a non-white group. In my American Community Survey data research, there was no way to tie the income or homeowner status of residents with their race, so if significantly more white residents are wealthier homeowners, they may not feel as threatened by the development as others.

A 2018 opinion piece in the Detroit News addressed logistical concerns with this boon of building. The article's author outlined concerns with the rapid pace of development: "The Detroit Department of Transportation and the SMART bus system must collaborate on providing non-stop service along Michigan Avenue between Corktown and Ford's facilities in Dearborn," "Job training must be accelerated to an almost war-mobilization pace," "If qualified local workers can't be found, the developers and the city must be prepared to recruit nationally."²⁰⁵ Although the article wasn't necessarily pessimistic, it did emphasize the fact that the city must be prepared to handle the full extent of the effects of this development.

Ultimately, I wanted to see for myself what stakeholders were saying. Armed with a set of questions specific for each group of individuals I would be speaking with, I took a trip to Detroit in the summer of 2019 to conduct my interviews.

²⁰⁵ "Detroit must gear up for Ford's Corktown boom," *The Detroit News*, June 17, 2018, <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/opinion/editorials/2018/06/17/ford-corktown-downtown-detroit-construction-boom/705978002/>

Chapter 12: Interviews

INTERVIEW WITH STEVE, BUSINESS OWNER AND FORMER RESIDENT

The first interview I conducted was with Steve, who owns a number of businesses including a popular bar, where I interviewed him in July of 2019. He purchased the building in which the bar was located about ten years prior, and he told me that pretty much the only thing around was nearby Slow's Barbecue. He said that at the time, downtown Detroit didn't have a lot going on, and Corktown drew his interest after he saw a show in the neighborhood at the Lager House. He was surprised at the popularity of the barbecue restaurant and thought it would be a good idea to open up a bar next door. He happened to know the brothers that owned Slow's, whose great uncle owned the building next door. Steve bought the building off of him and opened the bar.

Steve was concerned about the train station while it sat abandoned. He said that it was a "free-for-all;" that people could come and go as they wish, but noted that in about 2014 security started tightening up. Steve's main worry about the station was that it would be trashed beyond repair, and then would be condemned and torn down, so he said he - along with other business owners in Corktown - was very excited about the new development. He recalled that there were plans in the mid-2000s to move city offices into the station, but it proved to be expensive. He said he didn't want it to turn into condos, but was glad to see it redeveloped in any way.

As for the changes he sees coming to the neighborhood from the redevelopment, Steve acknowledges that there will be significantly higher demand on real estate in Corktown, which will lead to new construction. He doesn't want to see that construction bring major franchises into the neighborhood, saying, "I think that Corktown has really got some unique properties and unique businesses, and I want to see that continue." He also

believes that infill development will come to the various currently-vacant lots in the neighborhood.

Steve is already seeing the effect that this project is having on his business. He said that he is already seeing an increase in business as a result of the information center that Ford put in nearby. "I don't know how many people work there, I want to say 50 or 60, but we already see more people in here as soon as we open that are working in the neighborhood on a pretty frequent basis...so I think that once the train station is actually full, our businesses are going to be doing much, much better." He told me that around about 2011, when his bar opened, "Corktown was really busy, and then all of these properties opened downtown as downtown started to take off, and...the business level kind of waned in Corktown a little bit," but over the past two years, business has been getting better and better again.

He said that as a result, his bar started opening earlier, at 3pm instead of 5pm on the weekends. They are planning to expand the bar up on the second floor and add space for private events.

As for Ford's involvement, he said "they're definitely trying to engage the neighborhood and...try to listen, and they're also having...a lot of community events where they answer questions." As for the city's job reaching out to the community, he said, "I haven't heard much from the city." "It seems like Ford is handling more of the communication directly with the...Corktown Business District."

Steve really conveyed to me the importance of community in Corktown. He said that the area where his bar was located they called "The Block," because for a period of time it was really the only block with active businesses in the neighborhood. He said he loves that one can go from business to business so easily. "It's just a very walkable neighborhood in a city that doesn't have a lot of walkable neighborhoods." As businesses

opened up, there was a tangible sense of camaraderie. He said he helped the owners of the coffee shop next door open their business, and the owner of a local restaurant owned a woodshop where Steve could use tools when he was building his bar. “There was a really strong community of young...entrepreneurs trying to get something going.”

Steve said he struggled with the idea of “gentrification” in the neighborhood, and felt that at the time when he was opening his bar, he felt the term didn’t necessarily apply. “Gentrification seems to imply displacement, right?...This building was last used in like 1991.” He said that when “we moved into the rest of this block, there was nothing here, nobody was displaced by us.” He suggests that the potential for gentrification now is more of a threat for residents of Corktown than the business owners. “The prices in the neighborhood are going up...and people that may have lived there for a while have to move out because younger people are moving in that are making more money.”

As to other potential negative impacts that could come to the neighborhood, he spoke about parking issues that already exist in Corktown, and he feels will likely be exacerbated by a currently-vacant building that will employ thousands. But he doesn’t feel threatened by national businesses moving in. Steve owns the buildings his businesses, including a pizza shop across the street, are located in. “Now, it’s feasible that Domino’s Pizza could come in and buy one of these other buildings and put a Domino’s Pizza in, but I’m not really worried about that...I think that Corktown still has a spirit of...DIY and craft, in a sense, and people just appreciate the locally owned businesses more.” He knows that Ford is planning to potentially put food and drink locations in the train station’s first floor, and says he’s interested to see what type of places they choose, but he says, “as engaged as Ford is right now, I would be really surprised if they did use big national chains.” He said that he has heard that Ford is accepting suggestions as to what should go on the first floor. “If they put a Tim Horton’s across the street, then Dai that owns the coffee shop, you

know, that could potentially eat into his revenue, but again, this is one of the best coffee shops in the country. Nobody's going to really mess with his business too much."

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIA, BUSINESS OWNER AND RESIDENT

Patricia owns a small local grocery store on Michigan Avenue, and also lives in the neighborhood. Originally from Belgium, she had spent over 25 years living in New York before moving to Corktown. She said that she had been to Detroit a few times to visit friends and said she instantly fell in love with the city. She said that it reminded her of New York when she first moved there: "You can be an artist, you can open a shop...and make ends meet." She said that she explored the city a bit, and liked a few different areas, but settled on Corktown in part because it reminded her of the Belgian village where she grew up. She said, "Things just kind of happened, to be honest. I wasn't necessarily seeking to do something in Corktown." She recognized the need in Corktown for a little corner store like those that are so common in New York. When she first moved to the area, she said that if you need to run out and pick something up, you had to drive. "I have a friend who has a similar kind of shop in New York and I've always loved it. This is not my background at all. I ran a modeling agency in New York. But I've always loved that store." So she says she and a friend who is from the Detroit area put the idea together to open the shop.

She didn't have the connection to the city that she has now when the station was abandoned, but said that any beautiful abandoned building like that is sad. She said "it doesn't matter that the city, any city you're in, doesn't do more to preserve those spaces." She especially sees the connection that people who are from Detroit would have to the building, and said that she feels the same way when she goes home and sees things from her childhood are gone: "it pisses me off." As for what could have been done with the

building, she said that “you know it would take someone with ginormous resources to take on that kind of project...it could only be something big.”

She thinks it’s “incredible” that Ford has purchased it, but still said you have to wait and see what actually happens. “I think there may be a feeling of them taking over, because it’s not just the train station, it’s a lot of land around it. I don’t think anyone wants to live in ‘Ford Town’.” She mentioned that Ford invites small businesses to meetings, but said “time will tell.” “I think, from what I understand from people who grew up here and are from here, there’s always been a lot of promises about a lot of things...and nothing ever happens. Or it starts to happen and then it stops. And you end up with giant empty lots. I think Little Caesars [Arena] is a good example of what could happen.”

She said her fear is that, like in New York, corporations end up taking over and putting money over the good of the neighborhood. She said that in the East Village, where she lived for 20 years, buildings are going up that don’t “make sense.” She sees the “campus”-like setting of Ford’s development as being a little “Twilight Zone-ish”.

When I asked her how she’s going to deal with the changes, she said, “I’m going to keep everything in the shop as old as possible.” She said that she gets a lot of comments from people who come into the shop about how much they love the original tile and ceiling. “I mean on the business end, I’m sure it’s going to be great.” She mentioned that many shops around the area had opened in the previous 14 months, and that it made the area more pleasant and walkable.

As for Ford reaching out, she says she has been to one of the meetings. She said that the neighborhood has people who live there who were elected to be liaisons and go to the meetings, and then report to the neighborhood. She says that they do reach out and “they do a good job,” but she said, “I don’t want to say they’re out of touch, but it would be amazing if they had people who actually lived in Corktown that worked for Ford.” She

suggested this would be better than having people who were just liaisons, because they would get a better sense “of the neighborhood. Of what people are afraid of. I asked her if she thought that the outreach might end when the project is complete, as if Ford would feel that they had fulfilled their obligation there, and she said, “Hopefully not. The people that I’ve met at the couple of meetings I went to are super nice and excited and happy to be there, you know? They are definitely putting their best foot forward, but I don’t know.”

She is a member of the Small Business Association and the Neighborhood Association. She said the older business owners are staying on top of contact with the city and planners, but she doesn’t have time to get that involved as she has just recently opened the store. Because of this, she doesn’t really know about the city’s outreach to the community.

“There’s nothing not to like about this neighborhood. It’s beautiful, people know each other, there’s lots of people who have been here forever.” She said that the customers of her shop are people who live in the neighborhood, that they know each other and can catch up when they see each other. “People are really helpful, they look out for each other.” She said that people are proud of the community. “I honestly hardly leave, like even when we were closed on Mondays, I try to go to the local businesses, I try to eat at local restaurants...I think it’s just the best neighborhood...everybody looks out for each other, helps each other.”

I asked her if she thinks Corktown is a diverse community: “I want to say yes, but perhaps not.” She said, “it’s diverse but not as diverse as what I’m used to.” She thinks it will become more diverse with the new development, likely a younger crowd.

She said she doesn’t have any short term worries about the development, but she worries about the long-term. She told me about an article she read in Harper’s Bazaar written by a life-long New York resident, and said that everyone in Corktown should read

it to make sure that it doesn't happen there. People get excited about all of the money and new building, but "then all the good stuff disappears." She said that "what makes the neighborhood" are the little shops that people needs, as opposed to everything that is "big, new, fancy." "That's exciting for a minute, but eventually it's not." "In the East Village, when I first moved there, it was so full of cool little shops and antique shops and vintage shops...[now] most of those stores are empty, it's empty storefronts. Because people can't afford to open a store anymore." "I think that that's something that I worry about only because I have seen it, and lived it, and it breaks my heart to see New York that way now. You know? To anybody who hasn't [seen that]...it probably wouldn't phase them." She said that she "even mentioned this article when I went to that Ford neighborhood meeting. I mentioned it to the guy that was supposed to be one of the in-betweens...I don't know what people would make for it, but it's just [a] really effective look at what could happen here...if people are not really careful to listen to the neighborhood and the neighbors and people are just blind."

As for national chains coming in, she said "I've thought about it, but...I don't think those national chains are paying attention to Detroit, as much as they should." She said Detroit is still under the radar for a lot of people, "but you would never know it when you're here." But even if they did, "I don't even think it would work here." She thinks things need to remain small there, because she doesn't think that it's at the point yet that there would be enough business; "maybe once the train station is actually open, maybe, but then again, they plan on having a sort of market...[on] the ground floor."

Overall, she said, "I think it's exciting, but it is also something to be careful about, and I think...it sucks when a neighborhood is...owned by just one corporation." Of the current residents, she said that "you can just feel that...they're so proud of their neighborhood."

INTERVIEW WITH LAURA, NON-PROFIT EMPLOYEE

Laura is a non-profit business developer at the Mercy Education Project, which was founded in 1992 by the Sisters of Mercy. They serve girls and women in southwest Detroit, providing after-school tutoring, college and career readiness, GED classes, and workforce development. The organization was established in Corktown because the Sisters of Mercy lived there, and they found a need for after-school tutoring programs for girls in the area. All of their services are 100% free, and they provide transportation. Most of those they work with are in the Southwest Detroit area, but they also have kids come from the east side, and she said they also serve a large population of Arabic women from Dearborn who carpool to the center.

She is from the Detroit area and moved to Chicago after college, but moved back about a year before our conversation because she saw the revitalization that was going on, and she wanted to be a part of it. She said that when she was in college, the train station was “just part of the landscape” and that people would take their skateboards and hang out there. She said there was constantly talk of tearing it down, but she saw the cool side of it, and even when living in Chicago was paying attention to the back-and-forth about what to do with it. She said she wanted someone to buy it and do something cool with it. She told me about a law in Chicago that states that an effort must be made to rehabilitate an old building before allowing it to be torn down, and that she would like to see Detroit adopt something similar.

She spoke about how the train station represented a time in Detroit that too often isn’t spoken about; that there was a time before the blight. “No one really talks about the early parts of Detroit and its grandeur and how wonderful it was.”

She has mixed feelings about Ford purchasing the train station. She acknowledges the history that the Big Three have in the city, but after the bailouts during

the Great Recession, she feels a little less trust towards them, especially as they have often promised things and then gone back on their word. But she is optimistic that there will be some benefits to the project. “I think jobs will be the number one thing.” She also hopes that it will bring people into the city, especially that the workers will spend money in the area. “I want it to change the culture and how people look at Detroit, that it’s a cool place to be, that it’s a great place to be, that it’s a positive city.”

I asked if she had any fears about negative effects, and she immediately said, “Gentrification. It’s a huge fear.” She is afraid that residents will lose their voice through this process. She is afraid of “people forgetting about the people who have been here the entire time.”

The organization plans to deal with these changes through education, making sure that residents are aware of things that may affect them. As a member of the Corktown Business Association, she said she is privy to information that she can use to help other Corktown residents get answers to their questions or concerns.

She worries that because of gentrification, she may lose students, as most of the population they serve are low-income. They also rent the building, and are afraid that the landlord may try to sell the building, and if they try to buy a building, will they be able to afford a building in the area they want to serve?

She said the people at Ford are positive and are doing the best they can, but is concerned that they are sometimes late with telling residents when meetings are scheduled, but doesn’t know if that is intentional. She said she thinks Ford is going through the city first before the local business organizations, and that the locals’ voices could be heard a bit more. She does give Ford credit for coming to the Corktown Business Association meetings but says sometimes they don’t know to reach out until the locals reach out to them first. She said one of the biggest issues “on the CBA level is that we’re not getting the

information in time and deals are already taking place between...the city and these major corporations that are all the sudden interested in Detroit because that's the new thing. It's like, well, where have you been for ten years? Why now?" She said that the people in the neighborhood did "all the hard work in making this a great place again, and capitalizing on what we already have, and then all of the sudden you come in and, you know, take over."

As for how the city is doing reaching out: "Not well. I don't feel positive about how they're doing." She said that "transparency is really a part they need to focus on, [instead of] just focusing on making money." "We understand that the biggest concern with the city right now is density and population, but you can't disrespect your current residents in order to accomplish that goal." She said that the city is "100% focusing on who might come here," as opposed to those who are already there. She said this is a problem throughout the city; that the city is focusing on attracting young people with disposable income, "because there's really no middle-class housing here. It's either the 1% or people who get subsidized housing."

INTERVIEW WITH FRANK, CITY PLANNER

Frank is the "planning and design director for the Central Region" in Detroit, which includes much of the city's major business and tourist districts, including Corktown, as well as the central business district, Midtown, New Center, Eastern Market, the East Riverfront, and Belle Isle, as well as Delray, the neighborhood in which Detroit and Windsor, Ontario are constructing a second international bridge. He said that he is somewhat familiar with the history of Corktown, but no expert. He pinpoints the opening of Slow's Barbecue as the catalyst for the recent popularity of the neighborhood. He also

expressed familiarity with the Lodge freeway development that “transformed” the Briggs neighborhood that had existed in the area prior to that construction.

He told me that a neighborhood framework plan for Corktown launched about six weeks before we spoke in July of 2019. A neighborhood framework plan is a “city-led initiative...[that] guide[s] investment to improve core public assets in four (4) focus areas - parks & greenways, mixed-use and multi-family development, commercial corridors, and neighborhood stabilization.” The goal of these plans is to revitalize neighborhoods using their neighborhood’s “existing strengths.” As the project manager of Corktown’s plan, Frank oversees the process, which will take 10-12 months and “result in a document and a framework plan and...about three to four projects that will be immediately implemented.”

“When Ford purchased the train station and then sought public subsidy for the redevelopment of it, it triggered a community benefits ordinance, which is more or less an opportunity for the community to work with the corporations and the city to devise a series of quality-of-life enhancements for the area in and around the station.” Frank is involved in this process by “working with the residents to craft and develop a series of benefits that Ford is required to implement.” He has also been involved in some of the long-range planning working with the team at Ford as to “what happens outside the station,” making sure that Ford’s plans align with the city’s. His other duties during this process include “meeting with the Ford team and the building and safety team and reviewing plans for the rehab...everything down to the minutiae of permitting discussions, parking discussions.” He says that he gets down to the site about once a month.

I asked him how the city reaches out specifically to the residents and business owners in Corktown. He told me that there is a neighborhood action council formed as part of the CBO, which consists of Corktown residents who live in close proximity of the project. “That body continues to operate as long as Ford is meeting their requirements that

came out of this agreement.” By law, the council must hold at least one yearly meeting. “I think it’s a bit unique right now because we’re launching a planning process so...the city tends to be a little bit more hyper-engaged with residents, but generally speaking even if there wasn’t a planning process going on, it would be through the neighborhood advisory council, it would also just be kind of going to meetings and giving...updates on the project.” The CBO agreement is public, located on the city of Detroit’s website. It contains a rundown of the meetings and the final terms that Ford and the residents agreed on. The city also works with the Corktown Business Association. “That’s got about 100 businesses or so that we talk with.”

I asked him about the benefits he thinks this development will bring to the neighborhood. “I think first and foremost it’s a tax base. I mean, it’s multiple properties that, although privately owned, weren’t activated, so you’ve got from a shared finance standpoint higher tax revenue, you’ve got the income tax...any individual who works there, the city collects an income tax on, which creates a general fund, provides services throughout the entire city.” He said that having more people in the neighborhood will obviously mean more people will be patrons of the restaurants and bars in the area. He also said they hope to convert some of the currently vacant land into housing for the new residents. Finally, he said that Ford’s innovation in the neighborhood will be remarkable as well. “I think what’s really interesting too is...Ford’s vision and intent to kind of pilot ideas in and around this neighborhood that would be scaled up to a global level.” “So solutions you’re already seeing here...that’s the stuff you’ll probably see globally, so I think that’s pretty cool”

He doesn’t think that this development will have “much, if any” affect on the character of the neighborhood. In part, he says this is because the buildings that are being rehabbed are following the historic rehab code and receiving historic rehab tax credits, the

look and feel of the buildings will have to remain intact. He says that the only thing he thinks will change will be modern, taller development on Michigan Avenue. "I think when you get in kind of the heart of the neighborhood, you're not going to see a lot of change to the character. It's protected, one, and two, there's not a lot of land to develop on." As for the residential part of the neighborhood, he said, "It's not like you can demolish a home easily and then rebuild something that's...contemporary in nature, because the chances of you getting it approved to demolish a historic structure are very slim." He does say that the North Corktown portion of the neighborhood is more likely to change, but that is just because the area already is more vacant land than the rest of the neighborhood.

As for the businesses, he said that what makes Corktown cool now is the lack of chains, and he thinks that patrons will continue to choose local businesses because there is already such an appreciation for them there. He thinks that business owners are more likely to choose to leave and make money selling the building when they choose as opposed to being forced out by rising rents. He highlighted the unique nature of businesses in Corktown being that they are mostly owned by those running the businesses. "A lot of times when you run into businesses that are being displaced, it's because their rents have increased...or their subsidies have gone away, whereas here the majority of business owners on Michigan Ave. own their businesses, own their land and their building."

As for Ford, he says that he doesn't think they will be interested in putting national chains in their buildings, either. They're "required to keep the lobby open to the public as part of the community benefits agreement," and he says they need something to draw the public in. "So I could see them potentially interested in securing some more corporate or chain type tenants, but to their credit, they're in no way interested in losing that character because really that's the reason they wanted to move here in the first place...it's got its own feel because of these...historic businesses, mainly, you know, the

Irish pubs and...some of the new stuff that's popped up over the last ten years. So they're very conscious of the community, more so than I think you could say about a lot of the other global corporations." "They go above and beyond...like nobody's been requiring them to open up the [train station] space to multiple events to...host stuff there, and they've done that, like the light show in the winter and trick-or-treating."

As the project moves forward, Frank said he will be interested to see how Corktown's main street, Michigan Avenue, changes. "It's meant for cars, it's meant to get people in and out of the city, it's an alternative to the highways. It goes all the way to the airport, it's wide...they knocked down a ton of businesses to widen the street, and so it doesn't feel welcoming at all." Walkability is something he wants to see improve in the neighborhood, and thinks this will change the uses of Michigan Avenue. He thinks it could be lanes dedicated for autonomous shuttles going to the airport in Romulus or the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Some of the space, he suggests, could be used for cafe seating or pavilion space.

He also told me about the extensive green space that is being planned for the area around the train station. There will be a greenway behind the station which will be accessible through the building; it will have bike and pedestrian pathways. Roosevelt Park, in the front of the station, he says, will function as "the front door of the station." "You'll have this grand park, and then you'll be able to kind of peruse through this...awesome lobby, and then you'll come back out and it'll be this like, playground for toys and stuff...for all ages. And then you can hop on and go right to the river."

As for the extant train tracks, "there will still be at least one set of tracks which is for freight, because there's a...tunnel that goes under the river to Canada...And then another set of tracks has been kind of temporarily held as the state and the city explore reintroducing passenger rail." He said that "in some regional transit plans and visions this

would kind of revert back to potential commuter rail...[that] has the ability to connect to like, Ann Arbor, and from Ann Arbor...there's a like a whole system that takes you west and north and south." Finally, the other tracks "were purchased by Ford and those will be kind of converted into a mobility space...this will kind of be an outdoor playground for that."

We concluded our conversation talking again about the CBO process. "We've already kind of started some...meetings. Like I said, we've only launched about six weeks ago [and we'll] have a series of focus workshops and then we'll have kind of like three larger community town halls over the course of the next ten months." "And the plan will focus kind of on, like, what do our streets look like...some streetscape designs, what does our new development look like, so like maybe some design standards on the new development, are there zoning changes we need to integrate, and then...what do our parks look like in the future."

INTERVIEW WITH SARAH, FORD EMPLOYEE

Sarah works for the Ford Motor Company as the automaker's Corktown spokesperson.²⁰⁶ We had a brief conversation in August of 2019. She also told me about the CBO process and its role in the train station redevelopment. She said that "Ford went through this process last year and it resulted in the Neighborhood Advisory Council (NAC) in our area unanimously voting for the attached proposal which was developed in close collaboration with the company and local residents over a number of months." She sent me a link to the page on Detroit's city government website, which went into greater detail

²⁰⁶ "Ford plans mobility testing sit behind Detroit train station project," Automotive News, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://www.autonews.com/mobility-report/ford-plans-mobility-testing-site-behind-detroit-train-station-project>

about the Community Benefits Ordinance that Ford is following. The website states that this ordinance applies “when a development project is \$75 million or more in value, receives \$1 million or more in property tax abatements, or receives \$1 million or more in value of city land sale transfer.”²⁰⁷ Detroit’s planning department then “reviews the project scope and defines the project’s impact area...[which] are set by census tract, but can be expanded to include additional impacted residents to ensure all residents in the impact area have an equal voice in the process.”²⁰⁸ The link she sent also provided information about how the Neighborhood Advisory Council that serves as the community liaison during this process is selected. It stated that, in order to be eligible, individuals must be 18 or older and live in the impact area, and they must also receive a nomination from a fellow resident; from them, nine are selected by various groups, including other residents, Detroit’s planning department, and council members.²⁰⁹

After we spoke, she sent me a copy of Ford’s Community Benefits Proposal. The three-page document detailed Ford’s “commitment to the communities in which we do business.”²¹⁰ It detailed some of the specific ways they intend to meet their goals. For example, under the heading “Support neighborhood development,” they mentioned commitments of “\$1 million to Grow Detroit Young Talent” and “\$1 million to Golightly to help train both adult and youth for emerging technology jobs.”²¹¹ Under “Mitigate

²⁰⁷ “Community Benefits Ordinance,” City of Detroit, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/zoning-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance>

²⁰⁸ “Community Benefits Ordinance,” City of Detroit, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/zoning-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance>

²⁰⁹ “Community Benefits Ordinance,” City of Detroit, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/zoning-innovation/community-benefits-ordinance>

²¹⁰ “Creating Tomorrow Together: Ford Community Benefits Proposal,” Ford Motor Company, accessed May 2, 2020

²¹¹ “Creating Tomorrow Together: Ford Community Benefits Proposal,” Ford Motor Company, accessed May 2, 2020

construction impacts of the development,” they stated that “Ford commits that normal construction hours will be between 7 am and 7 pm,” “Ford commits to a 48-hour response time to submitted complaints and concerns,” and “Ford commits to security cameras, fencing, patrol and other measures for all staging and construction storage areas.”²¹² This document was a clear explanation of the ways in which Ford actually plans to meet the goals set out by the Community Benefits Ordinance, though I did wonder how accessible this document was to regular community members, as I had been sent it directly from Ford’s spokesperson.

²¹² “Creating Tomorrow Together: Ford Community Benefits Proposal,” Ford Motor Company, accessed May 2, 2020

Chapter 13: Findings

There will likely never be another redevelopment project with the history and unique circumstances like those of the Michigan Central Station. But I would be remiss to say that it is not worth studying in an attempt to discover ways that even remotely similar projects can be conducted, because so many of the general concerns and hopes of the stakeholders are universal to anyone who lives in a neighborhood they care about. There are some key findings that I took away from this study. Number one is the resiliency and general confidence of Corktown residents and business owners. Community is key to Corktowners, from welcoming new residents to helping new business owners get started. Perhaps because of this, they have faith that even if national chains pop up in the neighborhood, people will still choose their local businesses. There seems to be a core belief amongst many of my respondents that Corktown visitors will choose local businesses over chains because that is so much of the draw to the neighborhood today.

Ford appears to be well aware of Corktown's current circumstances as a successful neighborhood already. On their website, they say "Our significant investment in Corktown will amplify the ongoing strength and resilience of the neighborhood...Building on the incredible community already in Corktown, Ford will work together with our new neighbors to integrate entrepreneurship, small business, arts and mixed-use community spaces."²¹³

From my own research, and from my own conclusions about the causes of Detroit's decline in the mid-20th century, I have my own concerns about Ford's massive role in the revitalization of Detroit, especially as it pertains to a little neighborhood like

²¹³ "Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford's Corktown Campus," Ford Motor Company, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>.

Corktown. Detroit is often one of the first cities affected by economic recessions due in large part to its indelible bond with the automotive industry. It's not a good industry to be tied to in an economic downturn, as new cars are a luxury people will surely choose to forego when they are dealing with financial difficulties. Such reliance on this industry is concerning. What happens if there is another recession? Will Ford's work on developing new automobiles halt for the duration? What will then become of the Corktown campus? Will it sit nearly abandoned?

Ford may be doing something right by injecting commercial space within its various buildings. The new development on the site of the former brass factory will be about 1/3 commercial space, for example.²¹⁴ By introducing non-Ford businesses on the same sites, the hope is likely at least in part that these new buildings are not 100% reliant on the success of Ford to avoid complete abandonment.

It appears to be of significant importance for Ford to make information about the project accessible to all who want to learn more. The company appears to be doing a relatively good job reaching out to and involving the community in this process, although some voiced concerns about the timeliness of meeting announcements. Of course, it remains to be seen if Ford's outreach will continue to play out in a similar manner throughout the rest of the development process, and what the results of this level of corporation-public partnership will be once the project has been completed.

I must admit the shortcomings in my own research, however. No series of interviews can ever truly grasp the extent of the varied views about a project unless I were able to talk to every single resident of Corktown. In finding my participants, I sent out an email blitz to every Corktown business and organization I could find from an online search.

²¹⁴ Benjamin Raven, "New details on development of Ford's Detroit-based Corktown campus," *M Live*, January 30, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/auto/2018/08/ford_continues_work_corktown_c.html

Most, I didn't hear back from. Some responded but said they were too busy at the time to participate. Ultimately, my interview subjects were those who chose to participate for no reward or benefit to them - often people who are likely more civically engaged anyway. My participants were not the most diverse either. Although I have chosen to keep them anonymous, I can say that they were all in roughly the same age demographic, all white, and all but one American-born. Corktown's diversity is celebrated, but the homogeneity of my sample group begs the question "Are all Corktowners truly represented?" This brings up the earlier issue of non-white voices potentially going unheard. The most outspoken voices about the project seemed to be white residents who were not originally from the neighborhood. Throughout my research process I found it nearly impossible to find opinions on the redevelopment from non-white residents. Thus, there are opinions that even Ford may be unaware of, and, if these are less favorable than those they have been hearing, Ford may feel a higher degree of positivity from the locals than is accurate.

Some people voiced concerns about certain issues that did not concern others. One concern is the one that inspired my research to begin with: the fear of the loss of the neighborhood's character with the new development and subsequent new residents and investment. It was possibly Patricia's biggest worry. She spoke of her experiences living in New York City's East Village, and watching all of the "cool little shops" be priced out of the neighborhood. She said that now "most of the stores are empty, all the restaurants that have been there for a million years closed." She worries that this could be in Corktown's future if the residents aren't aware and prepared to work against that fate. Yet city planner Frank doesn't think the development will have "much if any effect" on the character of the neighborhood. Due to the historic rehab code, and the fact that Ford is "receiving historic rehab tax credits," he says that the buildings must, by law, retain their historic look. He sees there being more infill development, and likely some taller buildings,

but “I think when you get in kind of the heart of the neighborhood, you’re not going to see a lot of change to the character.” Even in the little vacant land there is in the neighborhood, any new buildings would need to “adhere to some historic standards.” Here I saw a bit of a disconnect between the way Patricia and Frank defined character. To Patricia, it seemed that “character” was more about the content of the buildings, while to Frank it was about the look of the buildings themselves. When I was developing the idea for this paper, my own definition of “character” fell directly in the middle. Both the physical look and the content of the buildings do make up the character of the neighborhood, but historic Corktown without the “Corktown” businesses would be little more than a real-life EPCOT - beautiful facades filled with Target and Tim Horton’s.

Gentrification is a topic that I asked everyone about as it is a word that is familiar to those without a planning background, even though I have remained in a state of limbo as to whether it actually applies in this case. Still, “gentrification,” or something like it, was a concern on everyone’s mind. It was the first thing that came to Laura’s mind when I asked her about potential negative effects of the train station redevelopment. As her organization works with low-income individuals, she said “I worry because of the gentrification that we may lose students just because...they’ll have to move.” Steve said that he struggles with the idea of gentrification, because to him, it implies displacement, but doesn’t think that, at least when he was coming into the neighborhood, it applied, because many of the buildings were vacant. He does think that gentrification may affect the people who live in Corktown more than business owners, due to rising costs of living in the neighborhood, though he thinks that the people moving to Corktown - young professionals - may not want to live in the historic houses already in the neighborhood and may choose apartments that are being built now. Perhaps because we both come from a planning background, Frank also worried about gentrification-like effects, in terms of the

change of business makeup in the neighborhood, but wasn't sure about calling it "gentrification." He said that, because, as Corktown is unique in that most business owners own their buildings and won't be priced out by rent increases, they would more likely choose to sell their buildings when they feel like they no longer want to run their business, and are able to make a little money off of the sale. As Steve said, he's there forever. The idea that the future of one's business is in one's own hands, and not dependent on outside forces, perhaps allows Corktown's business owners to see the train station redevelopment as a net positive, and not concern themselves too heavily with potential negatives.

This is not true for everyone, though. It is important to not let those who do not own their buildings slip through the cracks. Laura, an employee of a non-profit organization, is worried about the future of their non-profit if rents go up. Being that the organization that is most at risk is a charitable organization brings to light concerns about the neighborhood's future. It might not just be new residents pushing low-income ones out, but the necessity of their community to move out due to money issues.

A number of interviewees voiced a concern about Ford "taking over" in the neighborhood. Patricia said that due to the fact that Ford's involvement in Corktown is not restricted to just the train station, but also to other buildings and currently-vacant land in the neighborhood, the concern is that they could be a larger presence in the community than some may like; "I don't think anyone wants to live in 'Ford Town,'" she said. "My fear would be just like what happened in New York...these corporations, you know, buy essentially entire neighborhoods...and at the end of the day it's really about money, so they build what makes sense to them, without really caring for what it ends up looking like."

"Broken promises" was a theme that came up amongst the less optimistic respondents. Both Patricia and Laura mentioned that there is a history in Detroit of big projects that have never panned out, or have panned out in ways that the community did

not plan for. Perhaps worse than projects that never begin is projects that go unfinished. Patricia mentioned the Little Caesars Arena project as one example. Laura echoed the sentiment: “historically, the Big Three companies have constantly...[gone] back on their word, or pulled out of the...community.” She was also worried because she has seen other developments in Corktown that have gone somewhat awry. “With developments like The Corner, the land developer said that he was going to have one look on it...and everyone agreed on it, said yes, that’s great, they moved forward, and then all the sudden, it’s totally opposite of what everyone agreed on, and so now we have to have a meeting about, you know, their misconduct about this development.” Ultimately, she said, “I’m really hoping that as they develop the train station, they understand that it’s really developing the most historic neighborhood in the city, and they can’t just come in and say one thing but do another.”

The city’s involvement was not quite as positively received as Ford’s. Steve said that he hasn’t “heard much from the city,” though he said he’s often busy with his businesses and isn’t always in Corktown. Laura said they needed to “be more transparent.” She said that the city focuses more on the businesses and residents that they want to attract to Detroit rather than those that are already there. She said that the city does tend to lean towards working with the “corporate partners” over the citizens. She said she hears from others as well that the city is “not trying hard enough, they should be coming to us, rather than us trying to hunt them down.” Of particular concern to her is the fact that not everyone has access to the internet, so putting materials online is not enough. This concern is backed by data; the 2018 American Community Survey stated that only 418 out of 555 - or 75% of - households in Corktown’s census tract have access to broadband internet, and only 447

- or 80% - have a computer at all.²¹⁵ While that's most of the households, it's still a sizeable minority that don't, which means that these individuals lack a major ability to receive information and give feedback about the project. To give the city some credit at least, when I spoke with Frank, he did say that the city was in the early stages of their process. I conducted my interviews in the summer of 2019, so it is possible that opinions on city engagement have changed over the past few months.

There are a number of positives identified as well. All respondents were at the very least cautiously optimistic about Ford's involvement in the process and their role in the future of the neighborhood. Both Steve and Frank felt confident that it was unlikely that they would put major chains in the lobby of the train station. Frank said that while Ford *could* put a national company in, they were drawn to Corktown because of the local character, and he believes that they would want to continue to support local businesses.

Everyone seems optimistic that the development will be good for business. Patricia said that with all of the businesses that had already been opening within the past 14 months prior to our discussion, it was "a more pleasant walk" around the neighborhood. Steve said that "we're already seeing an increase in business" after the opening of the information center. He said that once the train station is open, all of the new workers in the neighborhood will "greatly impact all Corktown businesses." Laura spoke of how the project "sounds like a lot of job growth." Steve saw new building as a result of the project as being a good thing; "all of these vacant lots that run down Michigan...we're getting construction on. We'll start to see streetwall come back which I think is really good for the avenue here, and will be good for the neighborhood." Frank also mentioned that one of the

²¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, "Computers and Internet Use," 2014-2018 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (DP02), American FactFinder, accessed April 28, 2020, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP02&tid=ACSDP5Y2018.DP02&y=2018&g=0400000US26_1600000US2622000_1400000US26163521400&vintage=2018.

biggest benefits he saw coming from the development was the tax base, due to the fact that individuals that work in Detroit - even if they don't live in the city - have to pay city taxes. He said that this "creates a general fund [that] provides services throughout the entire city," so the benefits of development in Corktown will benefit the whole of Detroit.

Everyone was also glad that something was being done with the long-abandoned building. Laura talked about how the building spoke to a time in the city that goes unremembered by many today, the time of opulence and riches, and that the architecture of the train station was reminiscent of that. Steve said that "we worried for a long time that Matty Maroun was going to tear it down because the city was putting too much pressure on him to fix it, and that would have been horrible because it's architecturally incredible, you know? It's like a monument...I'm just really elated that they're actually going to, you know, preserve it, restore it. It's great."

Perhaps the most "mixed" response was on Ford's outreach to the community. Patricia said that they do a good job, and that the information center was a positive, but that she takes some issue with the fact that Ford relies on neighborhood-resident liaisons between the community and themselves, rather than having locals as members of their team. She emphasized that by having Corktowners on the team, they could get a better sense "of the neighborhood. Of what people are afraid of." Laura said that she thinks Ford has "a really positive team, I think they do the best they can," but she said she feels that "they're a little late with getting information and telling us when meetings are scheduled, and I don't know if that's just them being uninformed or them intentionally making sure that people aren't getting the information they need." She said that she gives them credit for coming to meetings of the Corktown Business Association and that "they take it upon themselves to make sure that they're reaching out", but that "sometimes it's frustrating because they don't know to reach out until we poke them to do so." Steve was the most

positive local, saying, “I think they’re doing a pretty good job of engaging; they’re handling it the right way.” Frank was positive as well, saying that Ford goes “above and beyond...Nobody’s been requiring them to open up the space to multiple venues to, like, host stuff there [in the station], and they’ve done that. Like the light show in the winter, and trick-or-treating,” are all things that Ford has taken it upon themselves to do.

Ford’s involvement as a whole was tricky to Laura. “I was skeptical on a major corporation like Ford buying it...and I’m still skeptical about it.” She says that they need to “put the money where their mouth is, and if they’re going to do something for the community, they better stick to it.”

I asked everyone about if they felt that Corktown was a diverse community, and I got a variety of responses. Laura said that she felt it is “very much” a diverse community, but feels that the potential “gentrification,” in her words, “is going to hurt the diversity.” Steve said that it’s diverse “within reason,” but acknowledges the homogeneity of the people “working on Corktown” around the time he arrived in the neighborhood ten years earlier. Patricia said, “I want to say yes, but perhaps not.” Ultimately, she decided that it is diverse, though not as diverse as other places she’s lived.

The biggest recurring idea that came up in my interviews was “community.” Patricia said that “everybody looks out for each other, helps each other.” Laura said that community is “the driving force of all the projects; everyone works really well together...the residents and the businesses, we’re all in it together.” She said that even though business owners are technically competitors, “they want to, you know, thrive for the neighborhood, not necessarily for their own personal gain. They want to make this a culture rather than ‘I’m just going to open a restaurant and make a quick dollar.’” Steve said that the older businesses help the new ones open up, and that there was a particular

sense of camaraderie amongst the young business owners who were “trying to get something going” in Corktown.

Some of the respondents voiced their hopes, too. Laura said that she hoped that people would realize that there are things to do in the city, as the project “is going to force people to come down and spend money” because they work in the area. She said that she also hopes that it changes “how people look at Detroit, that it’s a cool place to be, it’s a great place to be, it’s a positive city.”

I was also surprised to see what things people were *not* concerned about. Most surprising was the fact that most people seemed unconcerned about national chains moving into Corktown. But it was also surprising to see that people weren’t concerned for different reasons. Steve wasn’t concerned because he thought Corktown patrons wouldn’t choose to go to national chains over local ones, while Patricia didn’t think national chains would be interested in opening in Corktown, as she thought Detroit was still too “under the radar” to get national attention in that way. She mentioned that the types of businesses that might move into Corktown as a result should be things that the people there *need*, instead of what Ford may find “trendy,” which was an echo of the earlier statement from Raquel Castaneda-Lopez.

Chapter 14: What Should Be Done About Projects Like This?

I have to admit that I went into this project a pessimist. Or, at least, a realist, given the history of large corporations building large projects in small communities. There were flaws and concerns, but there was also a good deal of confidence and optimism amongst the various stakeholders. I was not expecting to see the extent of outreach on the part of Ford that I did.

I immediately had a hunch that a large part of why Ford has been so focused on involving the community in this process is the history that Ford shares with the city and residents of Detroit. It seemed clear to me when I visited the Information Center and read the community newsletters that perhaps Ford feels somewhat indebted to the community, and that it is Corktowners' right to have a say in the project, as in many ways Ford became the mammoth company it did due to this very neighborhood. As Mary Culler, Ford's director of development in Detroit, said, "For more than a century, Ford and Detroit have worked together to turn local ideas, inspiration and hard work into programs that improve people's lives...We look forward to our continued partnership with the community and others as we develop Michigan Central Station into a place that inspires innovation and creativity."²¹⁶

A good next step for the study of a project like this would be to create a "cultural resiliency" plan for Corktown that could provide a framework to analyze the wants and needs of the community and then use the plan to assess the outcome of the project. In speaking with city planner Frank, I was informed of a "CBO," or Community Benefits Ordinance. Upon looking at the CBO for this project, I was pleasantly surprised to see that

²¹⁶ Benjamin Raven, "Ford opens information center near train station in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood," *M Live*, June 19, 2019, <https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/06/ford-opens-information-center-near-train-station-in-detroits-corktown-neighborhood.html?fbclid=IwAR3bSoshnVp-J93AUy3Vm5wozsT25K1I1j0vrKMU4c-xwdZgGakIV2An8RY>.

this could serve as an excellent jumping-off point for a cultural resiliency plan. The only difficulty with this is that the goals set out are hard to measure. How can we truly say that Ford has sufficiently “Respect[ed] the culture and people of the neighborhood” or “Prioritize[d] small businesses?” Some of these are all a matter of opinion, while the success of other goals, like “Local hiring and job training” or “Use local contractors” are more easily able to be determined. But we should not eliminate goals like the first two just because they can’t be easily measured, because they are some of the most fundamentally important goals in preserving the neighborhood.

Chapter 15: What Is Next for the Train Station?

I began the first planning stages for this project in the fall of 2018. Since then, there has been a major development in world events that may prove to change this project. The outbreak of the novel coronavirus, referred to as COVID-19, began in late 2019 and made its first appearances in the United States in early 2020. It was deemed a pandemic on March 11, 2020, and as of the writing of this paper, it continues to ravage the world.²¹⁷

Michigan has been one of the hardest hit states.²¹⁸ It is difficult to say at this point how long this pandemic will last, but some estimates say we will only be able to begin a return to normalcy once a vaccine is developed, which could take over a year. At this point, it is hard to say how this may impact the Michigan Central Station redevelopment. Currently, the Ford website states that “In accordance with Governor Whitmer’s stay-at-home executive order, we temporarily suspended construction on the Michigan Central development job sites...Work will start up again when it is safe to do so.”²¹⁹ A Detroit Free Press article said that “residential and commercial construction work will resume in Michigan on May 7, but it is unclear if Ford will decide to resume work immediately.”²²⁰

As for current plans, there are hopes to someday soon return train service to the station, with a proposed route to Toronto.²²¹ Steve Dubensky, “who will oversee the

²¹⁷ Donald G. McNeil Jr., “Coronavirus Has Become a Pandemic, W.H.O. Says,” *New York Times*, March 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/health/coronavirus-pandemic-who.html>.

²¹⁸ Elena Renken, “Tracking The Pandemic: How Quickly Is The Coronavirus Spreading By State?,” *NPR*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/03/16/816707182/map-tracking-the-spread-of-the-coronavirus-in-the-u-s>.

²¹⁹ “Michigan Central Station, Centerpiece of Ford’s Corktown Campus,” Ford Motor Company, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://corporate.ford.com/campuses/corktown-campus.html>

²²⁰ Paul Egan, “Michigan construction work to resume May 7, Gov. Whitmer spokeswoman says,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 29, 2020, <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/04/29/construction-work-resume-may-industry-official/3046435001/>.

²²¹ “General & Legislative Annual Report & Fiscal Year 2020 Grant Request,” Amtrak, accessed February 27, 2020,

redesign of the Michigan Central Station and its integration into the Corktown neighborhood,” said, “when we redo the station, we will ensure that we protect four passenger tracks...we’ll ensure that whatever we do, we’ll have the capability to bring passenger rail through there again.”²²² The Port Authority of Detroit also “commissioned a \$30,000 feasibility study on if Amtrak could return services to the iconic station, which “comes on the heels of Amtrak starting exploring the idea of reviving Detroit-Toronto service in its annual grant request to Congress.”²²³

There could also be a hotel. Though Ford was initially planning to dedicate the train station’s two highest floors to 40 apartments, they are now considering making them into 100 rooms for a boutique hotel.²²⁴ This would bring more money from non-locals into the neighborhood.

All that is left to do now is wait and see what happens. Much has been promised to this little neighborhood, and much could easily be delivered. The next few years will prove to be a test of the Ford Motor Company’s plans and the neighborhood of Corktown’s resiliency.

<https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/corporate/reports/Amtrak-General-Legislative-Annual-Report-FY2020-Grant-Request.pdf>.

²²² Rochelle Riley, “Ford is keeping the passenger tracks at Michigan Central Station,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 24, 2018, https://www.freep.com/story/news/columnists/rochelle-riley/2018/06/24/michigan-central-station/722967002/?fbclid=IwAR2rH4NNuPilGIDQACpSFdWD9cMsNHfa4vRdNBI_4Yioqe3bxk8-6Gok34Q.

²²³ Benjamin Raven, “Update on historic train station’s transformation into Ford’s Detroit campus,” *M Live*, May 23, 2019, https://www.mlive.com/news/2019/05/update-on-historic-train-stations-transformation-into-fords-detroit-campus.html?fbclid=IwAR3ekfnU7SfBq9w5Q-1FUik_ldB0V_6UPcSiOkD4FOMpZre7OciQ_mWrlg

²²⁴ “Ford Might Put A Hotel Inside Michigan Central Station,” Ford Authority, accessed February 27, 2020, https://fordauthority.com/2019/05/ford-might-put-a-hotel-inside-michigan-central-station/?fbclid=IwAR3VIEAAbJ1Hphzz-0AC5flJfg0t6Rs7LLOupOhGaQ_WBxBeZvUbcBbpgtI

Appendix

Interview with Steve, Business Owner and Former Resident

Tess: First, can we get on the recording that you have consented to be recorded?

Steve: I have consented to be recorded.

Tess: Alright, so, um, could you tell me a little bit about why you decided to open your business here?

Steve: Sure, um, I bought this building about ten years ago, give or take, um, my ex-wife and I, and, uh, the only thing on this strip was Slow's Barbecue next door, and this was, uh, like Detroit was really cool, was obviously a very, very different place, there was not really anything going on downtown, but Corktown was really cool and I was going to see a lot of music shows at the lager house which was down the street, uh, and it just seemed like a really interesting area, and Slow's was super busy. It still is, obviously, but it was like the busiest restaurant in the city and so I thought to have a bar next door would be a really good idea.

Tess: Yeah

Steve: Yeah, so, there was always a wait anyway for Slow's and so I kind of piggybacked off that and I was friends with um, Phil and Ryan Cooley, the brothers that own Slow's. Um, and so Ryan who is a realtor, um, I reached out to him regarding this building and their kind of great uncle actually owned the building and I ended up buying it off their great uncle.

Tess: Oh, wow.

Steve: So, yeah, that was, that'll be ten years in like, I guess February next year. So, nine and a half years.

Tess: Do you live in Corktown?

Steve: Up until six months ago I lived upstairs, the last ten years.

Tess: [laughs] Oh, wow.

Steve: [laughs] Yeah.

Tess: Do you still live in Detroit?

Steve: I live in Indian Village now.

Tess: Okay.

Steve: Yup.

Tess: Um, so how did you feel about the train station before it was purchased, while it was sitting abandoned.

Steve: I mean, I worried about it. You know? When I moved here it was a free for all, you know, we could go in and we did, went in there all the time. We could sneak in, it was no big deal. Um, and then a couple of years ago, maybe five years ago, they really tightened up security and sort of fenced it all in, and enforced a lot more, um, you know, trespassing and stuff like that. Uh, and so, I worried that it would be trashed beyond belief or you know, got to a point of no return, um, from scrappers and things like that, um, and obviously I've been, we've all been really worried about whether or not it was going to get condemned or torn down or something like that, and so this for us, and I am speaking for everybody in Corktown, we are really excited about it, or at least the business owners are.

Tess: So, before Ford purchased it, what would you have wanted to see done with it? Did you have any ideas?

Steve: I know, it just seems to me that it would have to be, it would have had to be something like that. Like, the city of Detroit, Kwame had plans to move all of the, Kwame Kilpatrick, our former mayor, had plans to move I guess all of the city offices into it, um, and that was like 15 years ago, but the amount of money that, I can't remember what the amount of money was, but it was just ridiculous, it was way too much money. And so, we knew that it had to be something huge, um, and I didn't want to see it turned into like, condos, or anything, you know, like, I mean I guess it wouldn't matter, really, but, I'm just glad that it's getting redeveloped.

Tess: So, what changes do you think will come to the neighborhood from that redevelopment?

Steve: Well, I think that what we're going to see is obviously, uh, a lot more demand on the real estate in Corktown, and that's going to lead to new construction, um, which hopefully is going to be a good thing, um, I don't want to see any like, you know, Krispy Kreme doughnuts or anything like that here, but, any franchises, I think that Corktown has really got some unique properties and unique businesses, and I want to see that continue. But I think that what we are going to do is get a lot of infill on some of the missing streetwall on Michigan Avenue, um, so, you know, all of these vacant lots that run down Michigan this way and even down toward the city which are now, we're getting construction on, um, we'll start to see streetwall come back which I think is really good for the avenue here, and will be good for the neighborhood.

Tess: Yeah, um, are there any changes that you think would more directly affect you and your businesses?

Steve: Well, to be honest, we're already seeing an increase in business just because Ford put the, whatever that thing is, on Rosa Parks, Michigan and Rosa Parks [the information center]. I don't know how many people work there, I want to say 50 or 60, but we already see more people in here as soon as we open that are working in the neighborhood on a pretty frequent basis, so you know, with just a few, just a handful of people working in that building, we're already seeing an uptick in business, so I think that once that train station is actually full, our businesses are going to be doing much, much better. They do well already, you know, don't get me wrong, but I think that it's going to greatly impact all Corktown businesses.

Tess: Do you have any plans about how you're specifically going to deal with those changes now?

Steve: Well, we started opening earlier. So, we started opening, we used to open everyday at five pm, we started opening at three on Saturday and Sunday because there are just more people milling around, you know? And again, I can't say that it's specific to the announcement that Ford made, but if it's not it's a real coincidence, like all of the sudden there are just more people in Corktown. And what we saw was kind of - when we opened, 8 years ago basically, Corktown was really busy and then all of these properties opened downtown as downtown started to take off, and Corktown kind of, the business level kind of waned in Corktown a little bit, and so, like 2017 wasn't as good as 2016 for example, um, but then, it really, like last year was great, and this year is just crazy good, and so I think that we're seeing people coming back into Corktown for whatever reason, maybe just expanding out from downtown, I don't know. It's hard to say. Um, but we're also going to increase the bar onto the second floor, and do a private event space upstairs so we can have - entertain more people on Friday and Saturday nights when we're at capacity.

Tess: How do you feel that Ford has done reaching out to the community about the project?

Steve: They've been pretty good about it, there's been a lot of, they like publish this like magazine, have you seen that?

Tess: No.

Steve: Oh, you should get a copy.

Tess: Yeah.

Steve: Um, it's, I can't remember what it is, but they put it in like, oh man, you may like walk down to Ima, where the haircut place, Detroit Barber Company, um, it was out like a couple months ago, but it's like a little magazine with all of the progress reports and you know, demographics and things like that. There was a little feature on like a pair of eagles that were born in the train station, so they're definitely trying to engage the neighborhood, and I think try to listen, and they're also having like, um, a lot of community events where they answer questions, and they had the Winter something or other where they like did a big projection on the front of it and they had beer tents, or beer trucks, and food carts and things like that out there over the winter which was really cool. So, I mean, I think they're doing a pretty good job of engaging, they're handling it the right way. But again, everybody's, in my - unless I'm really wrong, I think everybody's excited to see the redevelopment

Tess: How do you feel that the city has done reaching out to the community?

Steve: I haven't heard much from the city. Like, we, there is like the Corktown business association. The Corktown Business Association has been very on top of, um, like the communication with Ford, you know, so I think they're dealing with Ford a lot, or some liaison of Ford, so there is a lot of conversation going on and I get newsletters and stuff like that, but I also have eight restaurants so I'm super busy at times, I'm not only in Corktown, you know? There's stuff for me to worry about, but, anyway.

Tess: Okay, so it's more Corktown itself, and not much the city?

Steve: It's more, yeah, it seems like Ford is handling more of the communication directly with the Corktown central - or the Corktown Business District

Tess: So you mentioned that you used to live here, why did you leave?

Steve: Just because I can't like in an apartment above a bar anymore. [laughs] I mean,

Tess: While you were living here, what did you like about this neighborhood?

Steve: Well, you know, um, I just love this neighborhood, we just call it "The Block," like everybody that lives here calls it "The Block" because for a long time it really was the only like, active block in this neighborhood. Um, you know I love that we can go next door and get a coffee, we can go to Slow's, we can go to Gold Cash Gold, we can go to Motor City Wine now, um, there just a lot, it's just a very walkable neighborhood, um, in a city that doesn't have a lot of walkable neighborhoods.

Tess: Yeah

Steve: You know?

Tess: And how long did you live here?

Steve: I lived here for about eight years, nine years? I guess about nine years.

Tess: And where were you coming from?

Steve: I was born in Bloomfield Hills, or I was born in Dearborn Heights but I went to high school in Bloomfield, and then I lived in Chicago, I was an options trader in Chicago.

Tess: So, could you speak a little bit more to the sense of community that you feel here?

Steve: You know, when we opened, um, when we opened, like as the neighborhood expands and as the city expands, more and more people come in, but, really for the first like three or four years, like everywhere you went you knew everyone, because there were just like 50 people that were in their 30s living in Detroit, I don't know how else to explain it, um, and so you saw a lot of familiar faces and there was a lot of, there was a lot of teamwork, like I helped Dye open Astro next door, and I helped build a bunch of stuff for him, and we just like, he just used my ice maker every day, and there was just a lot of camaraderie in general, and like I said, Ryan who owns O'Connor realty helped me find this building and you know, O'Connor is two doors away, and Phil, where Gold Cash Gold is now, Phil Cooley used to have a, like a woodshop and so when I was building this place out and I was, I would go over there and use all of his tools and you know, do whatever I needed and bring it over here and so there was a lot of, there was a really strong community of, uh, young kind of entrepreneurs trying to get something going.

Tess: Did you feel like it was a diverse community?

Steve: Within reason. I mean, Detroit is pretty diverse compared to a lot of places I've lived, like Chicago, um, but, yeah, I mean I think that, you know, you're definitely looking at the gentrification word, you know, like, that's, it was all, you know, people in their 30s kind of working on Corktown. You know, the recording studio across the street, you know, everybody's kind of about the same age, you know, trying to work together to get something going.

Tess: So the gentrification issue isn't necessarily new in this neighborhood?

Steve: Well, I don't know. I struggle with that, because gentrification seems to imply displacement, right? There was no one in this building for 40 years. This building was vacant. And so, and the building next door, and the building next door to that. I mean, well, I take that back, I guess this building was last used in like 1991, right? This whole block used to be one taco restaurant, a taqueria, basically, including Slow's, including this, including Astro and O'Connor's this, huge, huge restaurant, and that closed in like 1991, and then it was just vacant, and so before Phil bought Slow's and, you know, we moved into the rest of this block, there was nothing here, nobody was displaced by us, so, you know, gentrification now is like, the prices in the neighborhood are going up, you know, and people that may have lived there for a while have to move out because younger people are moving in that are making more money. And so gentrification is a reality, but it's not what was happening here 10 years ago. I guess, maybe we were the catalysts for it, but I don't think that it is - applies to what we did, you know?

Tess: So it might be affecting the people who live here more than the business owners?

Steve: Right.

Tess: Just, I guess, speaking a little bit more to that issue, is there anything else that you could see coming from this redevelopment that could potentially have a negative impact to the neighborhood?

Steve: Well, again, this is a vacant building, and it's going to employ, you know, thousands of people, I guess? And so one of the struggles that we're already dealing with is parking here. Parking is really difficult, and so that's not going to, that's not going to get any easier with a couple thousand more people living here, but, I think that that's completely, that's just a fair trade off. You know, like look at Chicago, I mean Chicago's parking is insane, um, I think it's a worthwhile tradeoff to make for, you know, getting that much more jobs and you know, money coming into the area. And yeah, there's going to be more gentrification and displacement with the housing stock, but I do think that we are going to see a bunch of housing stock come on line that has yet to be built, you know? Because a lot of these are old houses and you know, young professionals that work at Ford are not really going to want to live in them, you know, so I think they're probably going to start building more apartment buildings and hopefully they will develop out on the stadium, you know, I can't stand those.

Tess: So, do you feel like, as a locally owned business, there could potentially be a threat from like, national businesses wanting to move in?

Steve: I would say that, no, because I own this building, alright, and I own it free and clear, so this bar will be here until I'm dead, and my son will take it over, you know? So I don't think that I'm worried about displacement. I also own the pizza shop across the street, and I own that building as well, and so, we're not going to go anywhere. Now, it's feasible that Domino's Pizza could come in and buy one of these other buildings and put a Domino's Pizza in, but I'm not really worried about that. I think that, I think that Corktown still has a spirit of sort of DIY, and craft, in a sense, and people just appreciate the locally owned businesses more. I don't know, we'll see, it's a possibility. Like, you know, I know that they're going to do some food and beverage options on the first floor of the train station, and that was the talk, and I'm really interested to see what they put in there, because it may be like an Applebees, or whatever. You know, I'll never support it, you know, I don't give a shit about that kind of stuff, but I also don't look at it as a threat. You know, we do what we do pretty well. But that's not, I think, though, that like, if they put a Tim Horton's across the street, then Dye that owns the coffee shop, you know, that could potentially eat into his revenue, but again, this is one of the best coffee shops in the country. Nobody's going to really mess with his business too much. Yeah, so, I don't know. We're not too worried about it.

Tess: So you see, I guess you think that people come and value those local businesses too much.

Steve: I think so. And I think that Ford is being very diplomatic about, like I don't think, I would be really surprised, as engaged as Ford is right now, I would be really surprised if they did use big national chains in their, in their building. I'd be distressed.

Tess: So they're sort of being an advocate for the neighborhood?

Steve: It seems like it, yeah. I think there's been talk about like, submitting ideas to them about what should go on the first floor in terms of programming for food and beverage, which would be great.

Tess: Well, those are pretty much all the questions I had, is there anything else that's sort of, you think might be important?

Steve: Um, no. I think that pretty much covered it. I mean, I don't, I'm not very critical of the whole thing, I think it's just a huge boon for us, you know? I mean, we worried for a long time that Matty Maroun was going to tear it down because the city was putting too much pressure on him to fix it, and that would have been horrible because it's architecturally incredible, you know? It's like a monument. So, um, no, we're, I'm just really elated that they're actually going to, you know, preserve it, restore it. It's great.

Interview with Frank, City Planner

Tess: So would you mind repeating for the recording that you've given consent to be recorded?

Frank: Uh, I have given consent to be recorded.

Tess: Alright. Um, so, the first thing I was wondering is, um, could you tell me a little bit about your job and what you do?

Frank: Sure, um, so I am the, uh, design, planning and design director for the Central Region, for the planning and development department for the city of Detroit. So, um, there are three regions, uh, three geographic regions within the city, um, that are broken up in this department. There's a West Region, an East Region, a Central Region. So I oversee the Central Region and the staff within that. Um, so that entails everything from design review on development projects to, uh, planning initiatives if it's neighborhood planning, if it's um, other sort of planning we've done, you know, along the riverfront, and so on and so forth. Uh, so basically being more or less the point of contact for this department within this central kind of geographic region, which includes Corktown, um, it includes the Delray neighborhood, which is, you know, where the new international bridge crossing's going in, and up north up like, to, Midtown, New Center, kind of up that area if you're familiar with that, Central Business District, and then east to like Eastern Market, Belle Isle, East Riverfront.

Tess: Okay. So, do you live in the area?

Frank: Uh, I do. So I live um, in Lafayette Park. I live just east of downtown here.

Tess: Okay.

Frank: Yeah.

Tess: Um, and how familiar are you with the history of Corktown?

Frank: Um, uh, you know, pretty familiar, not an expert by any means, but, um, obviously, um, familiar with the old Briggs neighborhood that was then kind of transformed post-urban renewal with the Lodge highway into multiple kind of um, isolated neighborhoods and obviously the Irish history, familiar with that. Um, and then also kind of the, um, I guess you could call it kind of the, the more recent history, um, you know, pre-Slow's, kind of, you know, kind of what kind of drove um the popularity so to speak of the neighborhood after Slow's came on board and now where it's at now, obviously with what's planned for the future with Ford and others. So.

Tess: Yeah, so, in your job, how do you tend to incorporate what you know about the history of that neighborhood?

Frank: So, um, so I think a couple of ways. One, obviously just from a, um, like a day-to-day, it's one of the local historic districts, you know, historic Corktown is one of the local, um, local HDCs, um, I think what we're leading now is the Corktown, kind of, one of the neighborhood framework plans, which the city has done around now 13 of these across the entire city, this just launched, one for Corktown just officially launched about six weeks ago, um, so in my day-to-day I'm actually project manager for that so I oversee that on the day to day um and this will be a ten-to-twelve month process, um, that'll result in a document and a framework plan and will result in about three to four projects that will be immediately implemented. Um, so, um, obviously in a lot of the work that we do now with this, it respects the history of the neighborhood, um, but also I think uh, the future, which is Ford, and what they, uh, what their intentions are and what their vision is for not just the station but the other properties that they um, have acquired and are planning to build.

Tess: So can you tell me a little bit about your involvement within the train station project, if any?

Frank: Yeah, so, um, so currently um so as part of the community benefits process, uh for the city that um, so, when Ford purchased the train station and then sought um, public subsidy for the redevelopment of it, it triggered a community benefits ordinance which is more or less an opportunity for the community to work with the corporations and the city to devise a series of um quality of life enhancements for the area in and around the station. So, I'm involved in that, and, um, working with the Ford team, working with the residents to craft um, and develop a series of benefits that Ford is required to implement, and then also, kind of I think more currently, with the planning process it's a little bit two-fold, there's some long-range planning that I'm involved with. So we work closely with the Ford land team on um, on what happens outside the station, um, not really programming within but, um, there's a lot of ideas about what happens outside, so, they're going through their own planning process and we're working with them, giving feedback to them on that, making sure it aligns and ties in with our work, and I think on the more current work, it's really um, kind of at the regulatory level. So you know meeting with the Ford team and the building and safety team and reviewing plans for the rehab, you know, everything down to the minutiae of like, permitting discussions, parking discussions on what they'll be required to meet, um, so that kind of current case management level up, and then kind of moving back to like long-range, which is what happens in and around the station. So, heavily involved, uh, fortunate enough to get in there probably, like, monthly, check it out, um, yeah.

Tess: So how does the city reach out specifically to the residents or business owners in that neighborhood?

Frank: Uh, so there's a variety of means, um. One is the neighborhood advisory - neighborhood action council was formed um as a part of the CBL, and that's made up of residents who are, live, within like very close proximity um, in some incidences are adjacent to that. So, that body, um, continues to operate as long as Ford is meeting their requirements that came out of this agreement. So they are the, by law they host one meeting a year, but then subsequently, um, there's a series of measures in here that they've asked for to update the public. So Ford's got a public, um, drop-in center where they give updates on the construction of, you know, not just the train station but their other sites as well, um, so that's - we interface with that body closely, um, two, uh, we interface through the planning process so, you know, a typical planning process, you know, you've bought clubs, your neighborhood association's kind of in and around the station, there's an active business association, that's got about 100 businesses or so that we talk with, um, so yeah I mean traditional means and methods through this. I think it's a bit unique right now 'cause we're launching a planning process so you tend to be the city's, tend to be a little bit more hyper-engaged with residents, but generally speaking even if there wasn't a planning process going on, it would be through the neighborhood advisory council, it would also just be kind of going to meeting and giving kind of updates on the project.

Tess: Is the CBL agreement public?

Frank: It is, so there's a website, on the city's website, I think there's maybe 12 CBOs city-wide now, but it lists um the whole rundown of all the meetings, I think there were 6 meetings for the whole, this one, um, and the final kind of terms uh, that were agreed upon by the residents and Ford.

Tess: Okay. What are some of the benefits that you hope the development will bring to the neighborhood?

Frank: Um, well, I think first and foremost it's a tax base. I mean, it's multiple properties that um, although privately owned, weren't activated, so you've got from a shared finance standpoint, higher tax revenue, you've got the income tax that the city of Detroit has, so any, any individual who works there, the city collects an income tax on, which creates a general fund, provides services throughout the entire city, you know, not just this area, um, um, you know, 5,000 workers means, uh, a lot of those people will probably uh eat, drink in and around the station, and then I think ultimately what we're hopeful of and what we're beginning - one of the key elements of this process um is to basically capture some of these 50,000, um, employees who will not you know, not only work here but in some other buildings that Ford will build, um, into land that is publicly held, so the city owns about 80% of the real estate up here, all vacant land, so if we can start to recapture some of those permanent residents, you know, you're building, you're, you know, getting those parcels online, you're getting families to move in, so on and so forth. So I think it's a variety of things. I think it's all that and then I think also um, I think what's really interesting too is the, um, Ford's vision and intent to kind of um pilot ideas in and around this neighborhood that would be scaled up to a global level. I mean, I think that's really crazy to think about, so solutions you're already seeing here, you're like, you know, there's already self-driving cars out every day within this neighborhood and eventually, um, you know, that's the stuff you'll probably see globally, so I think that's pretty cool.

Tess: Um, what effect do you think this redevelopment will have on the character of the neighborhood?

Frank: Um, I honestly, I think, so, so our planning study covers multiple neighborhoods, you know, you've got Historic Corktown, the station, historic Corktown, and then north Corktown. So the local historic district is, you know, I don't think it'll have much if any effect here. You've got to keep in mind, I mean, the rehab of both the book depository which is next door and the station um, will be up to historic rehab code, because they're receiving historic rehab tax credits, so the look and the feel, as much as it can and as much as possible, will kind of still feel like that, you know, historic um kind of feel. Um, subsequently I think the only think maybe you'll change i think if we just focus on this is you'll probably see more development along Michigan Ave, there's a lot of vacancy along Michigan Ave, there's a lot of surface parking lots along Michigan Ave, so similar to some developments that have already came up, like the old Tiger Stadium, um, you'll probably see a little bit more modern development, um, probably a little bit taller, um, there's not a lot of tall buildings on Michigan Ave right now, so once, you know, anything above three stories. I think that would be the only, one of the main things I see it altering the character of the neighborhood, but I think when you get in kind of the heart of the neighborhood, you're not going to see a lot of change to the character. It's protected, one, and, two, there's not a lot of land to develop on, um, so that works both, you know works a couple ways. One, it's not like you can demolish a home easily and then rebuild something that's you know, let's say, contemporary in nature, because the chances of you getting it approved to demolish a historic structure are very slim. And then two, like, there's not a lot of vacant land where you can propose something, because even then, um, you have to adhere to some historic standards. I think you'll see a lot more difference, um, and then a lot more development, like I said, along Michigan Ave., probably a little bit taller, won't probably be the historic brick buildings that a lot of what dots Michigan Ave. and then north of the highway, which is in, the north Corktown neighborhood association, um, where you just don't have a lot of homes now, and i think you'll see a lot of, I mean, if you assume the character is like, a lot of vacant lots, a lot of blight, a lot of disconnectedness between homes, that'll probably change, the character, so yeah.

Tess: Um, do you have any concerns about gentrification within the business presence there?

Frank: Along Michigan?

Tess: Mmhmm.

Frank: Um, yeah. I mean, I think what's great about the business, like what makes um, what makes Corktown cool, even before the neighborhood, or before Ford came in is, there's no chains, I mean there's like a couple chains, there's not a lot of chains, there's no big box stores, um, and I think people like, really appreciate that, and they come here for that, I mean a lot of the restaurants are locally owned, operated, so I don't. I don't really see a lot of um businesses being pushed out, I think by choice. Or, I mean, not by choice. I, I think potentially by choice, um, and I wouldn't, I don't think this would constitute to a definition of gentrification because I think what you'll probably see is building, property values increase and individuals who have operated in these spaces for many, many, many years, decades, potentially saying, you know what, I'm going to sell, I want to move, I ran this bar for 50-some years, um, I can make some cash, I can move. So I don't think um, the beauty of a lot of the businesses here is they're owned, the storefronts are owned, which is atypical, I think, you know, a lot of times when you run into, like, businesses being displaced, it's because their rents have increased and um, or their subsidies gone away, whereas here the majority of business owners on Michigan Ave own their business, own their land and their building. Um, so I don't and I think, you know, Ford is really interested in doing some, well one, they required to keep the lobby open to the public as part of the community benefits agreement, and in order to do that and you know make it a space that like people want to come in to, um, there needs to be um some amenities, retail, commercial. So I could see them potentially interested in securing some more corporate or chain type tenants, but to their credit, they're in no way interested in losing that character because really that's the reason they wanted to move here in the first place, they want you know i think the feel kind of like, you're just, just outside of downtown, it's got its own feel and it's got its own feel because of these kind of old, these historic businesses, mainly you know the Irish pubs and the, some of the new stuff that's popped up over the last ten years. So they're very conscious of the community um, more so than I think you could say about a lot of the other um global um corporations.

Tess: Yeah. I've definitely noticed them reaching out.

Frank: Yeah, they do, they go above and beyond. Like, so it's in the community benefits agreement it was, you know, pretty good stuff, but I think it's um, they've gone above and beyond that. Like nobody's been requiring them to open up the space to multiple events to like host stuff there, and they've done that. UM, like the light show in the winter, and trick-or-treating, you know, like this is sort of stuff that um, they're not technically required to do.

Tess: Um, that's it for my questions, is there anything else that you think is sort of important to mention?

Frank: Yeah, I mean I think, um, you know I think, I think it'll be really interesting to see what happens on Michigan Ave outside of just like, the makeup of the businesses, you know, like I don't know how often you've gone or have been on Michigan Ave, but it's like, it's meant for cars, it's meant to get people in and out of the city, um, it's an alternative to the highways, it goes all the way to the airport, um, it's wide. You know, they blew out, they knocked down a ton of businesses to widen the street, and um, so it doesn't feel welcoming at all. So, I - I think what is really interesting and I think really they'll be kind of behind it because that's kind of their idea, "How do we make things more walkable?" "How do we like, how do we attract employees who, like, don't necessarily want to like, drive to work every day?" you know? Um, so what I think is, is, will be really interesting to see the future of Michigan Ave and how it'll all shape out, um, because I think there'll be a lot of pressure put on the state because it is a state-ran road, the state of Michigan owns it and is responsible for the, the maintenance and the upkeep. But, um, I think as we move forward, like, what it looks like in the future. Is it like dedicated lanes for like, uh, autonomous shuttles, like, to get people to the airport and to like, the University of Michigan, which you know, is down in Ann Arbor. Um, or is it, um, or I think we've got some possibilities to do some stuff. Like it's different if you, I mean in a good way, it's not like you are like, man if you had a bit more street we could have walk, like larger cafe seating, pavilion space and um, you kind of have that, so you don't, you know what I mean? So I think like uh, I think it'll be really interesting to see what happens with Michigan Ave. Um, I think the other thing that's great, you have like historically a lot of industry, like many cities kind of located along the river, and uh, similar to this, um, city as well, you've got a lot of money going into this park, you've got a \$55 million being invested into the riverfront park, and i think it's like the city as a, over the course of many years began to improve its waterfront, make it inclusive and accessible to everybody, um. This spot is so conveniently located, like literally you'll be able to access, this is gonna be like a pedestrian and bike path through here, Make Creek Greenway, and you'll be able to access that out of the back, you know the south side of the station. Which i think is really great. Because i think it kind of, you know, I think this

is, there'll be so many connections point to this station, so not just the highways, but really coming east from the city, along the river, and then kind of coming in, you know we're talking, you know, we're really talking about making 14th, like making Roosevelt Park like the front door of the station, so turning this to two-way, and kind of just coming into this area, and uh, and it just being a really, really awesome space, so.

Tess: So, it's kind of living up to its history as the hub of transportation?

Frank: Yeah! I think so, that's a good point, I think, yeah, the multiple modes, right? So, um, which is, which I think is really interesting.

Tess: So this is where the train tracks are?

Frank: Uh, yes, they are. Yep. So the train tracks, so currently, um, there, there will still be at least one set of tracks which is for freight, because there's a, there's a, um, tunnel that goes under the river to Canada, so you can take, so that's how, it's goes under like right here. So that'll remain. And then another set of tracks has been kind of temporarily held uh as the state and the city explore reintroducing passenger rail, um, so like the main Amtrak service was like kind of way up north-ish, right here, um, but in some regional transit plans and visions um this would kind of revert back to potential commuter rail down, again, down to, that would ultimately connect, has the ability to connect to like, Ann Arbor, and from Ann Arbor, I mean, there's like a whole system that takes you west and north and south so like, um, and then the remaining tracks would be, um, those were purchased by Ford and those will be kind of converted into a mobility space. So like if you wanna do, who knows, like maybe it's a you know, all sorts, whatever mobility solutions come to light are, this will kind of be an outdoor playground for that.

Tess: Okay, yeah.

Frank: For lack of a better term. So it's not really the back, right? So it's, you'll have in the north you'll have this grand park, and then you'll be able to kind of peruse through this, this just awesome lobby, and then you'll come back out and it'll be this like, playground for toys and stuff for, for all ages, um. And then you can hop on and go right to the river. So it's really, it's well positioned, I mean obviously it was done that way similarly, um, similarly to mirror um, I don't know if you know like Grand Circus, but it's kind of got that like similar feel, it's got that like spoke and a half wheel type thing where then, so it's, and it's, the way it's laid out, they're kind of like, if you look at a larger map, they're kind of like teed up to where, like, I, I don't know if this is factual, I think it is but like basically they were meant to like kind of connect to each other.

Tess: Okay.

Frank: So. But this was never, obviously the whole point of this moving in and out of downtown with the intention it would develop.

Tess: Yeah.

Frank: So.

Tess: Is this also part of Corktown officially?

Frank: So, it's not, no, so, um, what this is, well it is part of the impact area. So the CBO, you have to draw, when you do any of these community benefits processes you have to kind of draw a line and say anyone like within there is gonna get impacted. There's no, like, methodology, there's no science behind it, so this blue line is actually the impact area. So it's more than just Corktown. So you've got North Corktown, historic Corktown, but then this is actually part of the Hubbard-Richard neighborhood, then there's some houses back here. So it was covered as part of the Ford community benefits agreement, and then the um planning study area which is white but really it should be yellow, you can have this, is this line. So the city just launched this study that follows a similar-type CBO line, but cuts out this area, because that was already part of another planning study

Tess: Okay

Frank: Prior to Ford. And then, it kind of goes around.

Tess: Okay. Well, that's pretty much it

Frank: Yeah.

Tess: It's been really, really helpful.

Frank: Yeah. So um, you can have this.

Tess: Okay, thank you.

Frank: Um, we have a project website, too, so if you ever want to check back on it and stuff, it's actually a short url, so I would just type in like "City of Detroit Corktown" as opposed to, I don't know, you can type that in, but um, there's a, just google "City of Detroit Corktown", you'll get the page.

Tess: Okay.

Frank: Um, but yeah, we'll have a series of um, we've already kind of started some, some small meetings, like I said we've only launched about six weeks ago, um, kind of have a series of focus workshops and then we'll have kind of like three larger community town halls over the course of the next ten months.

Tess: Okay.

Frank: And the plan will focus kind of on like, what do our streets look like, you know, some streetscape design, um, what does our new development look like, so like maybe some design standards on the new development, um, are there zoning changes we need to integrate and then um, kind of parks, so what do our parks look like in the future.

Tess: Okay

Frank: Yeah

Tess: Well, thank you so much

Frank: Excellent. So, uh, give me, send me an email if you have any other questions or anything

Tess: Okay

Frank: Um, and obviously when you guys are done I'd love to uh, see what you come up with.

Tess: Yeah, that won't be until May, but

Frank: Okay, well that will be, I mean we'll be, our intent is to wrap this up I would say probably in like June

Tess: Okay

Frank: So maybe some of this will work if you continue to track the project into your guys's work.

Tess: Yeah, definitely.

Frank: Awesome.

Tess: Thank you so much.

Frank: Yeah. Totally. Great.

Interview with Patricia, Business Owner and Resident

Tess: So, do you mind repeating for the recording that you consent to be recorded?

Patricia: I've consented to be recorded.

Tess: So, um, do you live in the area?

Patricia: Yeah, I do.

Tess: In Corktown?

Patricia: In Corktown, yeah.

Tess: Um, why did you choose to open your business here?

Patricia: Well, personally, I moved here from uh, from New York in October. Uh, I started to visit Detroit two years ago. I came to visit friends. I'd been living in New York since '91, I had no intention of moving. And I just came, I just fell in love with Detroit immediately. Um, it reminded me of what New York felt like when I first got there in like the early '90s. It just had that, that energy, people doing stuff and being affordable. You can be an artist, you can open a shop, you can do stuff and make ends meet. Which in New York you can't do anymore.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: So, I, I started to come visit regularly, um, stayed in different neighborhoods to figure out which neighborhood I liked most. First I really loved Hamtramck, um, but then, then I stayed here at the Trumbull and Porter hotel one time, and um I just loved this area. I'm from Belgium, and it reminds me of a little village.

Tess: Oh really?

Patricia: Yeah. It reminds me of where I grew up.

Tess: That's so cool!

Patricia: Yeah. So, and things just kind of...happened, to be honest. I wasn't necessarily seeking to do something in Corktown, um, it just so happened that I was in that hotel, somebody I was chatting with at the hotel said there was a space available here, that I should check it out, so I checked it out, met the landlord who lives upstairs. He is, he owns the building and lives upstairs, um, and then I found the place to rent here in the neighborhood before I got this space, actually. So it just kinda happened, you know?

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: Um, and, um, and also just kind of realizing once I started to spend more time here, realizing, especially coming from New York where you have access to, you have little corner stores everywhere. If you're cooking and you run out of something, you just go downstairs to get it. Or up the street. You know? And here, I, I thought, you know, I have to drive everywhere? You know what I mean? So, it just kind of made sense. I have a friend who has a similar shop in New York and I've always loved it. This is not my background at all. I, I ran a modeling agency in New York-

Tess: Oh, wow.

Patricia: This has nothing to do, but I just loved that store. That shop. So, so me and Autumn, Autumn is from here, she used to live in New York, um, we just kind of put this idea together and, and did it.

Tess: Wow, that's very cool.

Patricia: Yeah.

Tess: Um, so are you familiar with the history of the train station?

Patricia: Yes.

Tess: So, how did you feel about it when it was abandoned?

Patricia: Well, I mean back then I wasn't, you know I had zero connection to Detroit, so I can't say that I had feelings about it, um, so from that perspective I think that any beautiful historic building that's abandoned and remains abandoned is, is sad and upsetting and it just doesn't make any sense that, you know, the city, whatever city you're in, the city doesn't do more to preserve those spaces. And um, especially when you see those cities spending money on, uh, shit that nobody cares about, you know?

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: You know, and this happens in New York, too. You know, so many beautiful places are being torn down to make space for these ugly new buildings. So, I think, I think if you're from somewhere, it definitely bothers you more than, than you know, if you're just a newcomer to the area. I think that there's more... same in Belgium, when I go home and I see stuff that I grew up with disappearing, it pisses me off.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? But I mean, something like this is ginormous and majestic and beautiful and has so much history. So, you know.

Tess: Did you have any ideas about what could have been done with it before Ford announced what they were doing?

Patricia: I, I wouldn't say that I would know, because it's such a huge, I mean you know that it's something that would take someone with ginormous resources to, to take on that kind of project, so, it could only be something, something big such as what it's going to be.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? I can't even imagine that the city itself could have taken on that project, you know, that renovation and the, the maintenance and, it's I don't even know how many millions of dollars is going into that

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Who has that kind of money? You know, so, this makes sense, I would think.

Tess: Um, so how do you feel about Ford purchasing it?

Patricia: Um, I think it's incredible. I think that just like everything else, you know, you have to see, you have to see what actually happens. You know, projects, of course, in reality of what's really going to, is it really going to be, um. I think that there may be a feeling of them taking over, you know? Because it's not just the train station.

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: It's the land around it, and I don't think anyone wants to live in "Ford Town".

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know what I mean? And it's, and I could see, they do a little meetings, and you can go to these chats, and stuff, they invite small businesses, and I think neighborhood people as well. Um, so, I don't know. I think time will tell, you know?

Tess: Yeah, that sort of goes into my next question. What changes do you think will come to the neighborhood from that project?

Patricia: Changes, well, my fear would be just like what happened in New York, is that, is that these corporations, you know, buy essentially entire neighborhoods. And, and at the end of the day it's really about money, so they build what makes sense to them, without really caring for what it ends up looking like. I, the past 20 years I've been in the East Village which is a, an area similar to, I mean it's a city, but it's small buildings, you know, and these ugly buildings have been going up and they don't even make sense visually. It's just boring. It just doesn't belong there. Um, so, I think people possibly have that fear. I kind of think of it and I wonder, it almost sounds like it's going to be what it is modern. Like a mini campuses, cities, that, I don't know. Kind of Twilight Zone-ish. You know?

Tess: Um, how do you plan on dealing with these changes that might come?

Patricia: I'm going to keep everything in this shop as old as possible. Um, I mean that's the reaction that we get a lot from people coming in here. They love that's it's the original tile and the original ceiling and that it's a bunch of old stuff. Um, and I think people have a tendency of, even if they buy an old building, renovating everything. Making everything shiny. And I don't think people want that.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? So, we're just gonna see, it's a big wait and see

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? I think, from what I understand from people who grew up here and are from here there's always been a lot of promises about a lot of things, many, many things.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: And nothing ever happens. Or it starts to happen and then it stops. And you end up with giant empty lots, I think Little Caesar's is a good example of what could happen.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Because they made a lot of promises that are kind of just returning to reality. You know, so we'll see.

Tess: Um, what effect do you think the redevelopment will have on your business specifically?

Patricia: I mean, on the business end, I'm sure it's going to be great. You know? I think, I think uh, even in the past few months here, this particular block, in the past year, most of the shops, like George Gregory, Brightly Twisted, reopened, the tattoo shops, smoke shop downstairs, this is all, like, within the past 14 months. You know, so I think that this foot traffic wise it's more pleasant for people, you know, even if they walk from the train station, say they're working there, they want to go to the bagel place, it's just a more pleasant walk.

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: There's no, it's not like there's nothing.

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: So whether it's during the day, early in the morning, or the evening, there's, there's stuff happening. You know, people are coming in. I think on that end, great. Uh, I can't complain about that.

Tess: Um, how long have you been here? When did you open?

Patricia: We opened the shop December 8.

Tess: Oh, wow, that's very new.

Patricia: Very new, yeah.

Tess: Um, so, how do you feel Ford has done reaching out to the community about the project?

Patricia: I mean, I've been to one of the meetings. Um, they, they do reach out. I think, they also have that little center, that, I think it's just a few weeks ago that it's opened to the public on the corner of Rosa Parks, uh, where I guess you can go see the progress and what it is they're planning. I think they do a good job, I don't really know for a fact...So, okay, so the neighborhood has a bunch of people that were elected, like neighborhood people that live in the neighborhood to be sort of the, sort of liaison, you know, so they go to these meetings, I think it's every month, or something like that, and and they come back and report to the neighborhood uh, it's an agreement that they have with Ford, you know so that everything happens as smoothly as possible. Uh, because they obviously don't want to ruffle too many feathers, but, you know, at the end of the day, what matters the most?

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Yeah, the, that's again something that's going to take I think months, months and months to see, you know, okay, they start out with these great intentions, amazing if it remains that way, you know, but will it? I don't know.

Tess: So-

Patricia: And then maybe a little bit of, I don't want to say that they're out of touch but I think that it would be amazing if they had people that actually live in Corktown that worked for Ford. You know?

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: That better sense of, of the neighborhood. Of what people are afraid of. You know, as opposed to just having a liaison, you know what I mean? I think that at any job it's better to have someone who is living, who is in it, to really hear what the real concerns are.

Tess: So do you worry that maybe this outreach might end when the project is complete and it might, sort of, they might sort of cut off there and say that "we've fulfilled what we need to do"?

Patricia: Hopefully not, the people that I've met at the couple of meetings I went to are super nice and excited and (hey guys) happy to be there, you know? They are definitely putting their best foot forward, but I don't know.

Tess: How do you feel the city has done reaching out to everybody?

Patricia: I don't really have a thought on that, to be honest. Um-

Tess: So, you haven't had any sort of outreach from like a city planner wanting to talk to people?

Patricia: No, we have, so we're members of the Corktown Small Business Association, and then I'm also part of the neighborhood association, which is pretty new, so it's not exactly, you know, really, there were a few meetings, and then there weren't, um, so I think that the older people in the neighborhood, the older business owners are really, are really staying on top of all of that. Um, me personally, I just opened a few months ago, I, it's just two of us, were open 8 am to 9 pm, I just can't, really, get too involved with that. This is my, this is my (inaudible). And I try to, like for example Bob at McShane's, I don't know if it's one of the people you're going to speak to, he lives in the neighborhood, he is super, like he sends emails all the time about updates from the city planning this and that, um, so I think that maybe, or I feel at least that Bob knows what's going on and he's looking at (distraction). I mean definitely people are staying connected to all of that and people are on top of everything.

Tess: So, as a resident, what do you like about this neighborhood in particular?

Patricia: There's nothing not to like about this neighborhood. It's beautiful, people are, people know each other, there's lots of people that have been here forever, um, you know, and to me it's all tied into both living here and having this shop is that it's all neighborhood people that shop here. You know they come here, they run into each other. Maybe they haven't seen each other in a while, they catch up, um, you know? People are really helpful, they really look out for each other, and, and you can just feel that they love, they're so proud of their neighborhood, you know?

Tess: So there's a sense of community?

Patricia: I think so, yeah.

Tess: Um, do you feel like this is a diverse community?

Patricia: I want to say yes, but perhaps not. Interestingly enough, so I live on Bagley, and, so my side of the street is all houses, but on the other side of the street is, is housing. Uh, I don't even know what the term is here, but, when I lived in New York I lived in, it was the same situation, I lived on Avenue D, so it's all apartments and stuff like that and then on the other side of the street is all projects, um, so, I would say it's diverse but not as diverse as what I'm used to.

Tess: Okay.

Patricia: Yeah.

Tess: Do you think that that might change with the new development?

Patricia: I think so, yeah.

Tess: Do you think it will become more or less diverse?

Patricia: More. I would, I would expect. You know. That's, uh, with all this new workforce, you know, probably moves here, I mean, there's also all the new buildings that are behind us, you know, on the corner, so that's four more big units, um, which I'm sure a bunch of those people that are gonna come here are gonna be looking into. Um, a younger crowd, um, I'm expecting it to be diverse, I can't imagine them living in a neighborhood that's not.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know?

Tess: Um, just overall, are there any other sort of worries that you have about the effects of that new development?

Patricia: Nothing short-term, I think it's more long-term. Um, I, I saved this article that was published a couple of years ago in the Bazaar and it's a really long article, but it's written by someone who's essentially a life-long New Yorker, and, and it talks about all the change, the changes and the gentrification and all of that and it's so well written. And to me, it's what everyone here needs to read to make sure that it does not happen here. You know? Because people get excited, money is being thrown around, you know, people are building things, blah blah blah, but then all of the good stuff disappears, you know? What makes the neighborhood is, is the little shops, it's having a hardware store, it's having a, you know, things that people need. Instead of everything that's big, new, shiny and fancy, um, and I think that's exciting for a minute, but eventually it's not. Because for example, in New York now, I don't even know what the percent is at this point, but in the East Village, when I first moved there, it was so full of cool little shops and antique shops and vintage shops, you know, everything. Most of those stores are empty, it's empty storefronts. Because people can't afford to open a store anymore, you know, the prices have shot up. I think that that's something that I worry about only because I have seen it, and lived it, and it breaks my heart to see New York that way now. You know? To anybody who hasn't seen anywhere good, beautiful all of that, it probably wouldn't phase them. But if you see a place you love go through all of that, and now it, like most of the stores are empty, all the restaurants that have been there for a million years closed, um, so.

Tess: So, do you have any worries about like, more national chains coming in?

Patricia: I think about it, I've thought about it, but I don't worry in the sense that, I don't think that those national chains are paying attention to Detroit.

Tess: Okay.

Patricia: As much as they should, you know, they really should, but I don't think... I don't know when I moved here people were like, "What are you talking about, moving to Detroit?" and these were people that I think are educated, well-traveled, you know, keep up with stuff that's going on. I, I can't think of one person that said to me, "Oh my God, amazing" like, "I can't wait to come visit you," you know? I think that Detroit is still in a way, below the radar for a lot of people and for big things. Um, but you would never know it when you're here because when you're here, it's like

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: People are doing stuff, people are excited!

Tess: Yeah. I never knew, like, what other people thought about Detroit until I left, and I was like, "Wow, you think this?"

Patricia: I mean, not one friend said to me, "Oh my God, amazing, I've been thinking about it, too."

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Everybody's like, why aren't you moving to L.A.?

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? Um, so, and you can't really explain Detroit to people.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: They have to come. Come visit. And you know, feel it out.

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: So, I think national chains, and, and I don't even think it would work here. You know? Even us opening this shop, it's not a, you know, we're busier in the evening, we're getting busier and busier but it's not a place where, you couldn't open a Starbucks here. And keep it, keep it, uh, going. Um, it has to be small. I don't even think that opening like a regular grocery store, like, say, I don't know, a mini Kroger or whatever, as people do, would, would be sustainable. It's, there's, there's Honeybee in uh, south, well, it's kind of walking distance, or people go to Whole Foods, people come here for their last-minute things. Their essentials. I can't image that people would, there would be enough business around here.

Tess: So you think the people around here just wouldn't choose to go to places like that?

Patricia: Maybe they would but I don't think that there would be enough business to justify a place like that being open. Like at least not yet. Maybe, maybe, maybe once the train station is actually open, maybe, but then again, they plan on having a sort of market, you know, the ground floor is supposed to be, kind of a market, with produce, I don't know, like but a whole bunch of different things. But people need it to buy essentially groceries there, yes. So, uh, I know that people would love to have a Trader Joe's here, but like everywhere, you know, like, everyone

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Everywhere. Like you just want to have a Trader Joe's.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: So, and it's, and it's odd that the closest one is in Grosse Pointe.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Why would there be a Trader Joe's in Grosse Pointe? Where you need it the least.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? Here, well, here we have nothing. I don't want, Honeybee is amazing, but it's Honeybee, it's not, it doesn't have all the variety of stuff, uh, sometimes it doesn't have what you need. I shop there myself, but sometimes you need garbage bags, you know?

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Right? Or stuff that you know, you don't always know you're gonna find. Uh, Whole Foods, parking is a pain in the ass over there, uh, there's always, it's just busy, plus now it's all there on the right. So you're gonna feel like you're shopping on this, you know Whole Foods land. You don't have choices. So, Trader Joe's I'm sure would be good.

Tess: Yeah. So it would have to be something kind of specific that they feel like they need to be successful?

Patricia: I think so. Yeah.

Tess: Okay. Um, if you have the name of that article I'd be really interested to read that.

Patricia: You know, I saved it on my phone because I can never find it. Are you planning on moving back here, when you're done with school?

Tess: I would love to.

Patricia: Yeah?

Tess: Yeah. That would be really great.

Patricia: I know I texted it to someone. I'm looking through my texts. So the title is, it's called "The Death of A Once Great City" and it's so good.

Tess: Yeah? I'll take a look at it.

Patricia: What's your email address?

Tess: Um, it's tess lynch t-e-s-s l-y-n-c-h at utexas.edu.

Patricia: Okay. I just sent it to you.

Tess: Thank you.

Patricia: I even mentioned this article when I went to that Ford neighborhood meeting, I mentioned it to the guy that was supposed to also be one of the in-between. I think, I don't know what people would make of it, but it's just really effective look at what could happen here twenty, fifteen, twenty years if people are not really careful to listen to the neighborhood and the neighbors and people are just blind and there's lots of, of funds and money on

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: I think, I think it's exciting, but it is also something to be careful about and I think it, it sucks when a neighborhood is, is owned by just one corporation. You know, to put it in those terms.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: Um, it, as Laurie said it's, it's pretty much the same developer you know that borrows land and built the iconic home buildings that, it's boring.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: So, it's something to be careful about.

Tess: Yeah. Well those are all of my questions, if there's anything else that you think is worth mentioning...

Patricia: I really love Corktown. It's just beautiful.

Tess: Yeah, I love it.

Patricia: It's just really, it's really, and it's fun to live here because there's a lot of Airbnbs around here, so lots of people visiting and just, everybody you meet says the same thing, that they had no idea that Detroit is what it is.

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: And all these little pockets and all these great neighborhoods and, and to be able to walk around here is what I love. Because I, I honestly hardly leave, like even when we were closed on Mondays, I try to go to the local businesses, I try to eat at local restaurants, um

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: You know? I think it's, I think it's just the best neighborhood.

Tess: Yeah.

Patricia: It just is. Everybody looks out for each other, helps each other.

Tess: Yeah

Patricia: So, yeah.

Tess: Well, that's all I have. Thank you so much

Patricia: Well, you're welcome! Thank you.

Interview with Laura, Non-Profit Employee

Tess: So, would you mind repeating that you consent to be recorded?

Laura: I consent to be recorded.

Tess: Okay, so, um, could you start off by telling me a little bit about what this organization does?

Laura: Yeah, sure, no problem. So Mercy Education Project was founded in 1992 by the Sisters of Mercy and we are girls and women only, that's the population we serve, a majority in southwest. So for girls we provide after-school tutoring, college and career readiness, um, really we're just kind of that extra parent to help them through the education process and get them into life after high school. Um, and then also for women we are, we do GED classes and prep and then we get them ready to take the GED, and then we help them with our workforce development, take those next steps, either uh direct employment, some type of trade school, or formal education like college.

Tess: Okay. And what specifically do you do here?

Laura: So I am, I wear many hats, I do uh, non-profit business development, marketing, event planning, and I also just started our young professionals junior board. So board management on a lower scale.

Tess: Alright. So why was this established here, in this neighborhood?

Laura: Well because the Sisters of Mercy lived in Corktown.

Tess: Okay.

Laura: And they found a need, uh, among, it started with after school, with like these girls just in the neighborhood and in southwest Detroit, um, and it, just having somewhere to go after school when mom and dad are still probably working, so it started as tutoring, and then how we, the women's component came apart of that is that the women were like, "Oh, we need help, too," and so that's when we started to do our GED testing, because the mothers of the girls we served also had academic needs.

Tess: Okay.

Laura: And, and they saw that their daughters were improving, and just really being gung-ho about their education, so they wanted to be a part of that as well, to better, you know, their own lives.

Tess: So are most of the people from Corktown, or is it a little bit further out?

Laura: So we primarily serve southwest Detroit.

Tess: Okay

Laura: And so, Corktown is kind of interesting, where it's a neighborhood within southwest Detroit, um, but it kind of has its own identity and whatnot. Um, so yes, short answer, we do serve Corktown and southwest Detroit, because that's where we can provide transportation, so, all of our services here are 100% free and that includes transportation. So, we provide transportation just in the southwest region. But, that being said, if you can find your way, your own way here, outside of southwest, we have open doors for you as well. So we do have you know students that live on the east side of Detroit that come here by mom or dad or just mass transit to get tutoring. And a lot of times, um, our women's program comes from the um, Arabic population in Dearborn, so they're a really tight-knit community, so they all kind of just carpool together, um, and take their GED classes, and then go back home to Dearborn.

Tess: Oh, okay.

Laura: Yeah.

Tess: Um, so do you live in the area?

Laura: I do. So I currently live in Lafayette Park but I'm also relocating to southwest Detroit.

Tess: Okay.

Laura: Yes.

Tess: Um, so, when this train station was abandoned, how did you feel about that at the time?

Laura: Um, well, to be honest, um, so a little bit about my back story, I grew up in Metro Detroit, I went to Oakland University, and as soon as I graduated Oakland University because there were no jobs in Detroit, I moved to Chicago, uh, and lived there for almost ten years. And about a year ago is when I moved back home because I saw the revitalization that was happening in Detroit and I wanted to do my part to grow, essentially, do my part to help my home become, you know, a wonderful metropolis again. Um, you know, when I was in college, it was just kind of another thing that was part of the landscape, um, didn't really have too much attention, it was kind of that cool place that people would break in to, and like, take their skateboards to the roof, so it was kind of more just like part of the urban background. Um, there was constantly talk back and forth about tearing it down, and what that meant, so, um, my point of view from the train station was as a college kid, um, in, at Oakland, seeing the cool side of it, that, you know, was part of the Detroit landscape. Um, and then also when I was in Chicago, keeping up with Detroit news, it was constantly seeing that battle, back and forth of like, "well why should we save it?" or "we have to save it," okay, "then what are we doing with it," so I, I constantly saw that, that battle, over this giant, massive, iconic building, um from an outsider's point of view, which was really interesting. So.

Tess: What did you want to be done with it?

Laura: I think it's gorgeous, I wanted someone to buy it and put it to use. Um, coming from Chicago, um, there's a law there that first you have to conserve a building before you can take it down, and I really wanted Detroit to um adopt that law. Um, so I'm all about preservation. Um, if it has good bones why not put the effort into it, and there's so many things within Detroit that were torn down, and that train station was something that spoke to a culture that, you know, goes beyond when all the blight and stuff happened. So I thought it was kind of like really, one of those really cool things that um, was built in the 1920s that is not an era that people really discuss about Detroit, right? So with our parents' generation and our generation and everything, with the history of Detroit starts in the 1970s with all like, the racial tension but no one really talks about the early parts of Detroit and its grandeur and how wonderful it was. Uh, so I felt that train station because of the architecture was kind of touching on that. So that was kind of cool, it was like one of those spots that you can go to and be like, okay, there was a culture in Detroit before, you know, the riots in the '70s.

Tess: Um, how do you feel about Ford purchasing it?

Laura: Uh, I feel mixed. Um, historically the Big Three has been a huge part of Detroit, and this region in general, um, but because of the bailouts, I was of, that I saw while I was in college, I was very skeptical on a major corporation like Ford buying it. So, and I'm still skeptical about it. I just, they need to, essentially, speak plainly, put the money where their mouth is, and, if they're going to do something for the community, they better stick to it, because historically, the Big Three companies have constantly, you know, went back on their word, or pulled out of the, the community, and essentially, as a resident, and someone who came back, I'm tired of that behavior.

Tess: Um, what changes to you think will come to the neighborhood from the redevelopment?

Laura: Um, well I think jobs will be a, the number one thing. Um, just being on the, the CBA, uh, you're hearing a lot of what's going on and what their plans are. I get to be privy to that information and it sounds like a lot of job growth. Um, I hope the culture of Detroit, that it helps it a lot, that bringing people in um, resocializing what is Detroit, that people who are like, "oh, there's," constantly, you hear, like, "there's nothing to do down there," blah blah blah, and that's changing, and I think them coming down is going to force people to come down and spend money, because that's, you know, that's where the work is. So I think it's going to, uh, I want it to change the culture and how people look at Detroit, that it's a cool place to be, it's a great place to be, it's a positive city, um, rather than what we've been taught throughout the years. So I think, um, I want everything positive, I want to come from this revamp of the train station.

Tess: Do you have any fears about potentially negative effects?

Laura: Yeah, gentrification. That's a huge fear. Um, the, you know I understand capitalism, and money runs everything, and tends, residents tend to lose their voice in that process. So, that's a humongous fear. People forgetting about the people who have been here the entire time.

Tess: How do you plan - or this organization - plan on dealing with those changes?

Laura: Uh, I think a lot of it starts with education. Um, as a person who works here and then also serves with in this, the community, um, I personally would just take opportunities to learn, keep, you know, not essentially the, stay one step ahead, but like as soon as there's something that could affect the residents, make sure it's on their radar. Um, one great thing about being on CBA is that I'm privy to which neighborhood block clubs are in the area, so if someone does have concerns, I can direct that question accordingly, so they're getting the right information, um, and the also being an educational facility, you know education is key to you know, new, bigger and better things in life, so, you know, keep our program strong and make sure we're staying true to our mission, and who we serve, and making sure they're walking out better than what they came in.

Tess: Um, what effects do you think the redevelopment will have on this business?

Laura: As in this business? Um, I worry because of the gentrification uh, that we may lose students just because of, the people, the population we serve is more poverty, that they'll have to move. Also, we lease this building, so it's, you know, we worry if our landlord, you know, one day gets a great deal that he just can't turn down and sells the building. And then also, to piggyback off that, when we are in a position to build a brick-and-mortar location, can we even afford it, in this area that we serve?

Tess: Um, how do you feel Ford has done reaching out to the community about the project?

Laura: Um, so, I've worked with people on Ford. I think they're a really positive team, um, I think they do the best they can but I think there are rooms for improvement. Um, I feel they're a little late with getting information and telling us when meetings are scheduled, and I don't know if that's just them being uninformed or them intentionally making sure that people aren't getting the information they need. So.

Tess: So, because you're working with the business association,

Laura: Yes

Tess: Do you feel like you, like they're communicating more through organizations like that? Or are they reaching out on their own to businesses?

Laura: I feel that they're going through the city first

Tess: Okay

Laura: And the, so one of our biggest criticisms at, on the CBA level is that we're not getting the information in time and deals are already taking place between you know the city and these major corporations that are all the sudden interested in Detroit, because that's the new thing, it's like well, where have you been for ten years, why now, like why, because we did the, all the hard work, in making this a great place again, and capitalizing on, what we already have, and then all of the sudden you come in and you know, take over and all that stuff, so, um, it could be better. It could be more transparent. So

Tess: So, do you feel like the residents and business owners don't have much of a voice in the decisions?

Laura: Uh, I think they have a very small voice. I think it's there and we're, that's one of our biggest strategies is how to grow that voice. Um, Ford, I will give Ford credit that they do come to CBA meetings, that they, they take it upon themselves to make sure that they're reaching out. But sometimes it's frustrating because they don't know to reach out until we poke them to do so. Um, I can't speak too much on what they do for the residents, because I've only been privy to the business side, um, but again, there's always this looming question with residents of like, well why didn't we know about that, you know? So how do we, that's the biggest thing with the residents and the businesses, like how, why didn't we know about that, how could we learn about this in the future, because we know that we have to do our work, but we don't even have the information readily available in a timely manner. So that's, that's where there's a lot of tension.

Tess: How do you feel the city has done reaching out?

Laura: Um, not well. I don't feel positive about how they're doing.

Tess: What could they do better?

Laura: Uh, be more transparent. We understand that they won't, they need, we understand that the biggest concern with the city right now is density and population, but you can't disrespect your current residents in order to accomplish that goal. And so, I feel transparency is really a part they need to focus on, and just focusing on making money.

Tess: Do you think they're focusing more on the people that will come to the city as opposed to the people who are there?

Laura: Yes. 100%. 100% focusing on who might come here.

Tess: Okay. Do you think they're focusing on just businesses or are they focusing on residents who might come here as well?

Laura: Um, well, I'll use myself as a personal example. Um, so I currently have an apartment in Lafayette Park, and uh, it's a studio, very affordable, whatnot, and when a company came in and bought my complex midway through my lease, you know, I'm ready to renew, do all that stuff, I love the location, um, you know, my rent went up \$100. And so, they're pushing everybody out because now Lafayette is considered "downtown." So I think they're not so much necessarily going for businesses, but also for um those, those younger people, a., who have more of a disposable income, or, in my case, the target audience that they're touching is that, you know, that young kid right out of college or in their last year of college who mom and dad is paying their rent. So. Because there's really no middle-class housing here. It's either the 1% or people who get subsidized housing.

Tess: Okay. Um, could you speak a little bit to the sense of community that exists here?

Laura: Yeah, I think community is humongous. I think that's the driving force of all the projects, um, everyone works really well together. I wouldn't, on the residents and the businesses, we're all in it together. And you know, coming from Chicago, that's a really rare thing, to see in Detroit. That we're in this together we're going to do this together, like business owners are swapping, um, information, like it's, they understand that they're competitors, but they want to, you know, thrive for the neighborhood, not necessarily for their own personal gain. They want to make this a culture rather than "I'm just going to open a restaurant and make a quick dollar," so I think community is what leads a lot of, a majority, if not all the incentives in the city.

Tess: Um, do you think this is a diverse community?

Laura: Yes, I do. Very much so.

Tess: How do you see that changing with the redevelopment?

Laura: Uh, going back to gentrification. Once, you know, just the depth, the textbook definition of what gentrification is, is going to hurt the diversity.

Tess: Yeah. Um, can you tell me a little bit about what you do with the Corktown Business Association?

Laura: Sure, so I'm a board of director. Um, this is my first year serving with them, right now we're working on bigger projects, so I do a lot more, uh I run the community committee, so that's just kind of being the pipeline for all the meetings that are going in to town, representing Corktown within the five neighborhoods of southwest, making, you know, just putting the input in the board and the members of the CBA in general out here for the other neighborhoods. Um, and then currently on our newer projects, pardon me, I'm going to be developing their development plan, and then their grants program.

Tess: Um, is there anything else that you think is sort of important to note about either the community as it is now or what might happen as a result of the train station?

Laura: Um, let's see here. I think at the community now, um, they're doing a better job but there's always room for improvement of the ideology of Old Detroit vs. New Detroit. Um, I think the current residents have a hard time with accepting the newer residents. Um, but again, that's totally off my own personal opinion, you know. So I come, I grew up in the suburbs, came back, and now I'm in Detroit, really excited, and blah-blah-blah, um, but I get a little pushback, it's like "okay, you haven't been here long enough, you don't know," and yeah, there are things I want to know, but I shouldn't feel discouraged to learn uh when I want to learn. So I think that's, that's kind of in the community level, that's always the tension there is this Old Detroit vs. New Detroit when it should be just Detroit, it shouldn't matter between old and new. Um, it's just where we are in our life cycle of the city. Um, and then with the train station, it's just, transparency is really key. Like, don't say one thing and go back on it. Um, and you know, with developments like The Corner, um, the land developer said that he was going to have one look on it, and, like, as in the facade of how it's going to look and how it's going to fit in the neighborhood, and everyone agreed on it, said yes, that's great, they moved forward, and then all the sudden, it's totally opposite of what everyone agreed on, and so now we have to have a meeting about, you know, their misconduct about this development, um, so yeah, it's just, be honest, and that's what I'm really hoping that as they develop the train station, they understand that it's really developing the most historic neighborhood in the city, and they can't just come in and say one thing but do another. So that's what I really hope, that they take seriously.

Tess: So, do you feel like the city is working with the board as opposed to the community?

Laura: Um, I feel sometimes they do lean a little bit towards the um, the corporate partner, the new corporate people coming in, and yeah, that does put Ford underneath that umbrella, um, they try, with the citizens, but they're not trying hard enough. That's one of the biggest complaints I'm constantly hearing all the feedback is like, they're not trying hard enough, they should be coming to us, rather than us trying to hunt them down.

Tess: Okay.

Laura: You know?

Tess: Yeah.

Laura: So that makes sense now. I don't want to throw the city completely under the bus because they are doing wonderful things, um, but it'd be nice if they could be a little bit more proactive with getting the information to the small business owners and the residents.

Tess: Okay. Do you have any particular way that you think, that would help if they did that?

Laura: I know, that's the, yeah, here's the problem, how do you fix it?

Tess: Yeah

Laura: Um, um, well I think one thing to understand and respect about the residents is that, the majority of them may not have access to online materials, so maybe just being a little bit more creative with how they get the information to people. Um, and also, yes getting the information to them is the first step, but then also having just access to someone who can explain if they have any questions, um, so I don't know if that could look like a call center, because who actually takes the time to do that? Um, but I feel if there was actually an easy way for them to get information outside of being online, um, that people who want to learn, they're going to know about it, they just have to figure out a way, they have to know it exists, you know? To have, to know to have access to that. Um, so just I guess being more creative with communication with the residents, um, it's I don't want to, it's one thing to say well did you go on the website, you know, like we get that everything has a website, but at the same time, can you maybe advertise it, celebrate it more, that this is going on instead of just saying "Oh, we had a meeting" type deal, so, I feel the city could celebrate what's, the changes that are going on, um, and then want to you know incorporate all that, everybody, residents, small business owners, into that celebration, into those partnerships, because they are amazing things and they are going to be, bring amazing things into the city, um, so just saying us to go to their website maybe not, might, might not be enough.

Tess: Okay.

Laura: So.

Tess: Is there any information either from Ford or the city that you think the residents or the business owners aren't getting? Or, are not getting easy access to?

Laura: Well, um, I think when it comes to who's developing and who's on those teams, that was kind of one of the, one of their critiques that I've heard is um, there's a steering committee that I'm a part of and then things were being developed in a certain neighborhood, and the residents were concerned that the people on the team were not even from Detroit, they were outsourced from other states, so um, hiring local help, uh, we have wonderful talent in Detroit, it should be utilized, so maybe that's where the city can step in, is hiring Detroiters and Metro Detroiters who grew up here, who stayed here, who want to be a part of it, instead of outsourcing, so, I mean the people who are going to be the most passionate about their home. So I think that could be really helpful is to like, really come back to that local team. And you never know because someone who's a land developer from Detroit's grandma might also live in the area, so that's input and more information that maybe they're not getting when they outsource talent.

Tess: Okay. Well that's all of the questions I have.

Laura: Oh, great!

Tess: Um, is there anything else that you want to mention?

Laura: Uh, no, I think we covered it all, so

Tess: Hopefully

Laura: Yeah, yeah, no for sure but let me know if you have any follow-up questions

Tess: Yeah

Laura: For sure

Tess: This was really helpful.

Laura: Good, good. I'm happy.

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